

## JACK BONNER'S GHOST.

BY W. H. MACY.

WE had no better man among all the crew of the *Dorchester*, whether in cabin or fore-castle, than my chum and crony, Jack Bonner. Jack had joined our ship at Christmas Island, where he had shortly before suffered shipwreck, and he and I soon contracted a strong friendship for each other. Though not, of course, regularly shipped, he had signed a sort of agreement at sea, by which he was to make the voyage in the *Dorchester* for a certain stipulated lay, having his choice either to come home in her, or to receive his discharge in the last Pacific port, and was thus counted as one of the regular crew.

But though, as I have already said, Bonner was one of our very best men, he had certain faults of manner which made him disliked by some of his superiors in rank. His opinions on most subjects were sound and well-considered, but he was often more forward in expressing them than is quite the thing for a subordinate on ship-board; and was always too honest and straightforward to go a step out of his way to conciliate any one for whom he had a dislike. Thus it came about, from no one particular circumstance, but little by little, that Captain Jeffreys was, as the phrase goes, "down on him." There was no love lost between them during the season in the Arctic; it seemed every day that the latent flame must very soon burst forth.

Our season had been a very unfortunate one, and the captain had determined to avoid the expense of making his port at Honolulu, as also the trouble which he expected to meet with from desertion among his crew. We ran down near to the port, and he ordered his boat away with a selected crew, leaving the mate with instructions to lie off and on until his return, it being now well understood that he intended only to get some fresh provisions, and then proceed on to some port in south latitude. The knowledge of that intention gave rise to much discontent in both ends of the ship, but Captain Jeffreys was not one to care much for our black looks, or for the volley of curses—"not loud, but deep"—which were hurled after him as his boat was

pulled away toward the harbor. We were to be tantalized all day with the view of that beautiful port, and the many ships snugly moored inside, and with the thought of how the crews of those ships were enjoying themselves, while we were doomed to pass two or three more long months at sea before we should drop our anchor in some out-of-the-way place, none of us knew where.

The dull hours dragged away, and eight bells came at last. We were all below at dinner except the third mate and the man at the wheel, when we were startled by the fearful cry of "fire!" A rush was made from the fore-castle to the deck, and a small volume of smoke was visible rolling out of the main hatchway. The third mate stood peering down into it, but apparently not at all excited by the danger. Some one was down there in the smoke fighting the flames with water from the scuttle butt, which stood in the steerage between decks, and shouting the cry of fire from time to time. It was the same voice which had first startled us—that of Jack Bonner.

The mate and other officers had poured out of the cabin pell-mell, and, as well as those from the fore-castle, were gathered round the hatchway in a high state of excitement, wanting to do something; but there was no need of our services, for the work was already done. Jack Bonner, single-handed, had extinguished the fire, and saved the good ship *Dorchester* from destruction.

The mate jumped down between decks, followed by others, and began to drag out into view the smouldering brands. The remains of sticks of light wood, which had evidently been placed where they were by no accident, and well saturated with oil, and also some wads of greasy oakum in a half-consumed state, were sufficient evidence that the fire was incendiary.

"What does all this mean?" demanded Mr. Green, the first officer. "What devil's work is this? Who first saw the fire?"

"I did, sir," answered Jack Bonner, who stood near begrimed with smoke and perspiration, and panting from his exertions.

"How came you to discover it?" asked the mate, looking at him sternly.

"I came aft in the dinner hour, sir, to get some water from the scuttle-butt, and saw the smoke between decks, for it was just beginning then to pour up from the hatchway. There's my tin pot, sir, right where I dropped it when I first cried 'fire' and rushed for a bucket."

"Where was Mr. Martin all this time? I left him in charge of the deck when I went to dinner."

"Mr. Martin was away aft there, leaning over the taffrail by the round-house. I raised the alarm when I dropped my tin pot and rushed up the steerage ladder for the bucket, which I had seen standing on the booby-hatch."

"What did Mr. Martin do then?"

"Well, he didn't do anything right away, sir. The first word he said was, 'shut up your noise;' but I yelled again as I rushed down to the water cask, and then he came forward and looked down, and asked 'where?' very coolly, I thought, as if he were in no great hurry about it."

"*You lie!*" roared the third mate, with a gesture as if he intended to follow the word with a blow. But Bonner was too quick-eyed; the tin pot which he had held in his hand was hurled full in the teeth of the pugnacious Mr. Martin, stunning him for the moment. Mr. Green and the loat-steerer interfered to prevent further violence, and Jack was marched aft and placed under guard in the cabin to await the arrival of his majesty the captain, for our boat was now to be seen coming out through the passage on the reef.

Captain Jeffreys fairly foamed at the mouth when the story was made known to him. The investigation was short enough; indeed, it was no investigation at all, being entirely an *ex parte* affair, for Mr. Martin had first gotten the ear of the captain and mate, and told the story in his own way.

The captain, blinded by his hatred and prejudice against Bonner, would not listen to anything from him. Indeed, Jack did not attempt to say much, for when he was directly charged to his face with having set fire to the ship, his lip only curled into a sneer, and he was disposed to treat the accusation with silent contempt. So the captain stormed away, having all the talk to himself.

"O, you may curl your lip and put on

airs," said he, "but I'll find a way to get the truth out of you! It was a nice plan, wasn't it, to set fire to the ship close to port! There would be no great danger to your precious carcass, and she would be pretty sure to be partly burned, so as to drive her into port for repairs, even if she wasn't burned up altogether, which would be still better, eh?"

"So far as I am concerned in that business, you are only talking sheer nonsense," said Bonner, quietly.

"O yes, of course," continued Captain Jeffreys, with rising rage. "I don't talk much else but nonsense, do I? And then, you miserable coward, you got scared at your own work after you had done it, and so you made a great show of raising an alarm and putting it out, eh? eh?"

"You know better than that, or *ought to* know better, sir; you don't believe yourself what you are saying," said Jack, as the tyrant stopped to take breath.

"O, don't I? We'll see about that; and I'll find a way to work the devil out of you that I've seen lurking in you for the last six months. What a pity you hadn't had courage enough to carry out your rascally plan! As it is, the ship isn't damaged enough to amount to anything, and so you won't get your foot ashore in Honolulu, after all; and in the meantime, I'll put you in a place where I can find you, my very innocent lad. O no! *you* didn't set fire in the ship—of course you didn't! Perhaps you even know who *did* do it, eh?"

"I think I do," answered Jack, as quietly as before, and with the same independent air, which only served to inflame the irate captain to a still higher pitch.

"I'll break your proud spirit!" he roared. "Here, Mr. Martin, put these handcuffs on this man."

The third mate, still smarting from the pain of his battered face, rushed forward eagerly to do the bidding of his superior. Bonner would probably have submitted to be ironed by any other officer, but this was the last straw to break the camel's back.

"Don't touch me, Mr. Martin," he said, in a low tone, but with a gesture of warning.

"What!" screamed the captain; "do you mean to say that you won't have the irons on?"

"I say they shall not be put on by *him*. If you want to iron me yourself, I will hold out my hands to receive them. But I'll

knock him down if he undertakes it, even by your orders."

"What! you'll knock down an officer of my ship, acting by my orders? Mr. Martin, are you a coward? Go on and do your duty."

Martin, thus adjured, took another step, which brought him within the range of Bonner's fist, and was felled to the deck by a blow sent straight from the shoulder.

"Here, Mr. Green! Mr. Conway! Here, boatsteerers! Take hold of this man and put him in irons! I'll have a cage made for him to-morrow."

"There's no need to call any more help, or use any more violence," said Bonner, holding out his hands towards Conway, the second mate, who now had the handcuffs, and who adjusted them with a single click. The prisoner then walked off and sat down on the toolchest.

"I said that I would never submit to be manacled by the third mate, and I never would; I'd have died first. And now, Captain Jeffreys, if you choose to carry me into your next port in handcuffs, or even in a cage, I suppose I can stand it. You may do your worst, now that I am in your power, but I believe you'll live to be sorry for this day's work."

And after that, though the captain continued to storm, and swear, and taunt him as before, he was not to be goaded into breaking his silence.

Having received on board a fresh supply of provisions from a shore launch, we made sail, and steered on our course to the southward. But the captain was as good as his word about the cage. He set the cooper at work the next day to make a cage of hoop iron, large enough for a man to stand erect in, or to lie down, as he might choose. The interstices were large enough to admit the passage of one's arm, and to allow of food being passed through to the prisoner inside.

The officers remonstrated at the unnecessary cruelty of caging a man who was not at all dangerous or violent; and Mr. Conway, the second mate, who was a firm believer in the man's innocence of the charge, said all that a subordinate could well say about it.

But old Jeffreys, an ignorant and brutal man at best, and especially unreasonable when fortified with liquor, as he was a great part of the time, turned a deaf ear to all re-

monstrance, and persevered in his scheme, the brutality of which was only equalled by its absurdity.

Like most whalers, on long voyages, the *Dorchester* carried two spare spars, one on each side of the quarter deck, with the ends projecting out several feet over the stern. Across these projecting ends several smaller spars were lashed, forming a platform, which overhung the sea beyond the taffrail, and upon this platform the cage, when finished, was lashed, and Jack Bonner ordered into it.

He obeyed the order without resistance, deigning no other reply to the captain's abusive language than the same cold sneer before mentioned.

One end of the cage swung open as a door, and when closed was secured by a large padlock. A piece of old sail thrown about the top of the cage served as a partial screen from the heat of the sun, and at other times from rain.

Thus was my noble young shipmate and crony secured in his strange prison, in full view of all hands, and exposed hourly to the taunts and abuse of a drunken tyrant.

He was let out for an hour or two every afternoon, that he might stretch his legs, but at such times was required to wear his irons, having them taken off again when he returned into his iron basket.

He was not allowed to talk with any of his shipmates, but, during my tricks at the wheel in the night, we were able to manage stolen interviews, being so near each other that we could converse in quite low tones.

The key of the padlock was always kept by the captain all day, and carried below at night, where the officer of the deck could not get it without waking him, for he was always in fear that some one would play him false, and befriending his poor victim in some unauthorized way.

His fears were not without good reasons, for the second mate, disgusted with the whole business, proved a staunch friend of Jack; and searching among some old iron in the transom locker, found a rusty key which fitted the padlock of the prison.

We had arrived within two days' sail of Huahine, one of the Society Group, and it had leaked out that this island was to be our port.

The weather was rough and squally when our watch was called at midnight, and the light sails had been furled, leaving the ship

under full topsails and jib. It was my turn-out trick at the wheel, the third mate being in charge of our watch; and I went aft to my post as soon as I came on deck. I knew, for Bonner had himself told me the night before, that he had a key in his pocket, and could liberate himself from his cage at will.

But although he had many indulgences during the second mate's watch on deck, his mortal enemy, Martin, was of course ignorant of all that, and we decided to keep him in ignorance.

As a black tropical squall was rising, such a one as gets up a gale of wind at a moment's notice, and spends its fury within the hour, the officer was stirring, and pervaded the whole ship, looking after his men, and seeing that all was clear for an emergency, instead of lounging around the cabin gangway, as was his custom in fair weather.

Bonner was lying down on his mattress at the bottom of the cage, but was broad awake, for my low whistle, given to indicate that the coast was clear, was answered at once.

"Dirty weather, Jack," said I.

"Yes. I rode out the rain squall very comfortably, in Mr. Conway's watch, thanks to him for sheltering me with his big tarpaulin. But I suppose if that thief of a third mate notices it, he'll take it away again."

"I'm afraid, Jack," said I, "that the next squall is going to be a very heavy one, and coming butt-end foremost. I don't like the looks of the sky at all, and I wish the topsails were clewed down before it strikes us!"

"Luff, boy, luff, close up to the wind!" called out Mr. Martin to me; but the order was superfluous, for the sails were already luffing and shivering.

The squall closed upon us so black and thick that the darkness appeared to be tangible—one could feel it. There was a tremor in the air, and the stout old ship began to careen to the blast, which came with an ominous moaning sound.

"Let go the topsail halyards, fore and aft!" roared the frightened officer. But he was too late.

Down she went on her broadside, so suddenly that the distended sails would not come down, though all the halyards had been let fly at the word.

For a minute or two there was a scene of confusion which no language can describe.

There was no need to call all hands, for every one came tumbling as fast as he could up the ladder, which was no easy matter. The roaring of the blast was fearful, and the ship was in imminent danger.

"Hard up your helm!" shouted the mate, as his head emerged from the cabin doorway. "Hard up, and get her off before it!"

He was closely followed by Captain Jeffreys, and both starting forward, disappeared in the darkness.

As the ship fell off to a "hard full," under the power of the helm, I heard a dull thud, and then a tremendous slatting and crashing, mingled with loud voices from everybody.

"Foretop-mast's gone!" I heard some one say, "and the jibboom, too!"

Then the word was given to square in the mizzen-topsail, but she was already falling off in obedience to the power of the helm. I heard a clanking of the iron cage behind me, and then Bonner's voice close to my ear:

"I'm not going to be drowned like a rat in a trap, but I'm going to make them think so. And here goes!"

I heard a rumbling and jarring behind me, then a sliding as of one heavy body upon another, and a heavy splash into the sea astern. I understood the whole. Jack had cut the lashings that confined the smaller booms, and now, with a single push of his feet, had sent the whole raft of them, with the iron cage attached, overboard. I looked round for him, but he was lost in darkness. I spoke in a moderate tone, then louder, but got no answer.

The rain was now coming down in torrents, and I had enough to do to keep the old Dorchester before the blast; while every one was busy forward securing the wreck of the spars. But the coming of the rain indicated that the greatest force of the wind was now spent, and in a few minutes it began to abate. The weight of the squall was over before Captain Jeffreys came aft, emerging from the pitchy darkness into the little semi-circle of light shed from the binnacle lamp.

"Bonner!" he cried; "how do you weather it? I ought to have remembered the man when the squall struck," he returned, "but I couldn't stop just then. Why, what— My God!" he roared, "he's gone overboard!"

For the blackness was passing away to leeward, and the moon shining upon the scene, as he jumped on the taffrail, showed the long bare ends of the two spars projecting astern, but not a vestige of the bridge or the grated prison which before had stood towering up from it.

As quickly as possible the ship was brought up to the wind, but the movement would amount to nothing, as was plain enough upon a second sober thought. For we had run several miles dead to leeward during the squall, and crippled as we now were, could do nothing at beating up again.

The terror-stricken old man, now completely sobered, questioned me eagerly, but of course I knew nothing. I declared that I had been so entirely occupied with the helm, during the great emergency, that I knew nothing of what had happened directly behind me, and within a few feet. I actually knew nothing of what had become of Jack after he spoke to me, and I even feared that he might have slipped overboard himself when he pushed the booms over. I observed that the third mate's face wore a look of malignant triumph, and I tried in vain to read any special intelligence in the feature of Mr. Conway; for I fancied that he might know more than any one else about my chum, if indeed he were alive. Old Jeffreys, haggard and pale, staggered into the cabin to drown his remorse in liquor.

We continued on our course towards Huaheine, rigging some jury-spars so as to carry a little head sail, but the Dorchester was now become that bugbear and terror of sailors—a *haunted ship*. The ghost was active, but pervaded only the cabin and the after part of the ship, where the "manifestations" were frequent, being of nightly occurrence.

The captain got no sleep at all, except by *drowning his senses*, and was driven to the very verge of insanity. Things were thrown about in his stateroom in the strangest manner, his small hanging mirror, which hung against the wall near his head, fell to the floor with a crash, and was shattered to pieces.

As he roused from his drunken sleep, he found the cabin in darkness, and caught a glimpse of a tall figure in white, which he declared had vanished out through the stern windows. He abandoned his stateroom and tried to rest better by taking up his lodgings on the transom, but that night a sepulchral

voice came in at the window, close by his head, and accused him of the murder of an innocent man. He rushed on deck wild with fear, went and looked over the stern, peering downward, as if he expected to see spectres rising out of the vortex round the ship's rudder, and walked the deck in a fearful state of trembling and cold sweat, not daring to go below again until after daylight.

The third mate was the next victim and suffered even more from fright than did Captain Jeffreys. He had been woken from sleep at the dead of night by that same unearthly voice calling out the word, "murderer!" in his ear, the sound appearing to come through the aperture of the side-lights which stood open in hot weather. Mr. Green, the mate, had also heard these strange nocturnal voices, though never seeming to be addressed to himself, and had once caught a momentary glimpse of a figure in white, which appeared to vanish into thin air before he could collect his bewildered senses, while the Portuguese steward, terrified beyond endurance, had deserted his lodgings entirely, and slept either above deck or in the "bull room," with the boat-steerers.

All this time Mr. Conway laughed at the whole business, and pretended never to have heard anything out of the common course. At the same time he fed the flame of the captain's remorse, by insinuating his firm belief that the young man who had met this dreadful and untimely fate was quite innocent of having fired the ship.

"If he didn't do it, who *did*?" demanded the old man at last, turning fiercely upon him. "You were in the boat with me, at the time, and of course, you know nothing about it."

"I *was* in your boat, sir, that's true, but I *can* have my suspicions, and I think I *do* know something about it. It wasn't Jack Bonner, sir, though he has paid the penalty with his life."

Captain Jeffreys's eyes appeared to flame from his haggard face like live coals in a bed of ashes, and he clutched a belaying-pin for support. "What do you mean?" he shrieked, "who do you think set the fire?"

"You wouldn't believe it unless I could furnish proof, and I am not quite prepared yet, though I hope to do it soon."

"But who do you *think* it was? Why don't you tell me? What do you mean by

these hints? *Speak out!*" he roared in a frenzy.

"The man who accused Bonner, sir, Mr. Martin, sir, is the real incendiary."

"I can't believe it!"

"So I suppose," answered the second mate, quietly. "You seemed to have made up your mind who was guilty before you asked any questions."

The captain trembled so that, but for his grasp on the belaying-pin, he must have fallen to the deck. Mr. Conway followed up his advantage.

"If you had listened to reason, sir, and investigated all the evidences, you might at least have doubted, and the blood of a fine young man would not be upon your hands."

A deep groan was the only reply, but the captain raised himself erect, as if by a mighty effort, and reeled below the cabin stairs.

"Gone to his bottle for strength," muttered the second mate. In a few minutes his gray head was again seen above the companion-way; he trod the deck with a firmer step, as if he had nerved himself up for some definite purpose, and meant to carry it through.

"Mr. Martin," he shouted, "Come down!"

The third mate was at the masthead looking out for whales, and obeyed the summons, wondering, as his looks plainly showed, why he was called down before his trick was out. The old man confronted him firm and stern, with determination in every feature.

"Mr. Martin! Did you set fire to the ship?"

"Who says I did?" demanded Martin, with a kind of tremulous bluster, for he was taken entirely by surprise and completely off his guard. The cool calm gaze of Mr. Conway was upon him.

"I say you did."

"Answer my question!" thundered Captain Jeffreys, seizing a capstan-bar from alongside the mizzen-mast. "If you hesitate or lie to me, I'll brain you on the spot."

The frightened wretch turned and fled forward among the crew, as he saw the weapon raised in the air. The question was already answered to the captain's satisfaction.

At a word from the infuriated old man, he was seized and hustled aft, we being only too glad to receive such orders. The hand-

cuffs were ready with willing hands to put them on for him. The captain, as soon as the burst of excitement was over, sat down on the deck with his face in his hands and groaned aloud.

"Better have another cage made now, sir," suggested Mr. Conway. It was a cruel thrust for a man already overwhelmed with agony, and the honest face of the second mate showed the next moment that he was sorry for it.

The poor captain, completely overwhelmed at the knowledge that he had caused the death of an innocent man, was carried below insensible. A raging fever followed, and continued during the whole time we lay in the bay of Huahine, where we arrived the next day.

As soon as we anchored, Jack Bonner, like one raised from the dead, made his appearance on deck among us and went about his duty. But he arranged with Mr. Green to have his discharge from the ship in case Captain Jeffreys did not recover his reason during our stay in the port.

Meanwhile, Martin, the third mate, deserted and got ashore in a native canoe, his escape having been winked at, for we were glad enough to be well rid of him. There was no law there to take cognizance of his crime; we did not care to have him as a shipmate, and it was not worth while to send him all the way to America for trial.

We were ready for sea again, and Jack Bonner was in the cabin with the mate, arranging the papers for a sort of informal discharge, for there was no consul at the port. When Captain Jeffreys, who had fallen asleep after a night of mild delirium, first awoke to reason and a full consciousness of his whereabouts, weak and exhausted as he was, his first demand was for the bottle of rum. The steward was in the act of pouring some into a glass, when Mr. Conway, stepping into the room, made signs to him to wait a minute.

"Captain Jeffreys," he said, "I wouldn't drink that stuff. It has made ruin and trouble enough for you already."

"I must have it," he said, eagerly, though in a faint voice. "I must drown thought and drive away remorse. The ghost of that innocent man is before me all the time. I have been the cause of his death, and I know now that he was innocent. Curses on that villain of a Martin, who accused him, when he had done the deed himself!"

"But what if Jack Bonner be not dead?"

"*What?*" said the captain. "Didn't I see his ghost here in my stateroom? And haven't I seen it before me night and day ever since he was lost? *Give me the liquor!*"

"Stay a moment," said the second mate, quietly. "Bonner is here in the flesh, not his ghost. Here, Jack! Come in here!"

The captain stood for a moment in doubt, then dashed the glass of liquor to the floor, and stretched out his arms.

"Come here, Bonner, and forgive me, if you can. I have suffered enough, God knows, for my wicked prejudice against you and my appetite for the accursed poison. Heaven helping me, I will never drink another drop of it as long as I live!"

"I told you, sir," said Bonner, "on the day that I was put in irons, that you would be sorry for what you had done."

"I know you did, and I have suffered such torments as neither you nor any one else can imagine unless he has been guilty of similar wickedness. I don't know how all this ghost business has been managed, though I suppose Mr. Conway has been at the bottom of it. Neither do I care. It is enough that you are alive, that my soul is clear of murder, and that I may still make some atonement for the wrong I have done you."

Bonner did not take his discharge at

Huabeine, and the change in Captain Jeffreys was radical and complete. He appreciated my chum as one of the best men in the ship, for such he really was, and the vow of abstinence made on a sick bed was most sacredly kept. The matter of the iron cage was never in any way alluded to, at least in his hearing. The effect of the captain's terror and sickness had worked such a change, that the *Dorchester* was thenceforth to all of us "a good ship," in the comprehensive sense of the term, as used by sailors, referring not so much to the vessel herself as to the treatment and discipline on board of her.

Before our voyage was completed, we learned, beyond all doubt, that Martin left Huabeine on another whaler, and, deserting again, became a "beach-comber," on one of the Caroline Islands, where he was killed in a squabble with the natives. We felt that he had met the fate which he deserved, and we all had reason to bless the second mate for his ingenious arrangement of the ghost business.

He had kept Bonner secreted in a locker in his stateroom, which was always closed in the daytime, and had let him out at the proper time in the night, to make the manifestations which had made the *Dorchester* for a few days only, a *haunted ship*.

## JACK'S TRIALS.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

Jack rushed to the door when he heard the postman's ring on St. Valentine's Day. Valentines had not gone out of fashion in N—, and Jack received four large square envelopes from the postman's hand. They were all for his sister Bess, of course, thought Jack—girls always got all the valentines; but not one of the envelopes is directed unmistakably to "Master Jack Northrup."

A vision of Cupids and roses and sweet little mottoes on white satin flits before Jack's delighted eyes; the little girl around the corner, with the blue eyes and yellow curls, must have sent it!

Jack tears it open, after trying once more to guess whether it has a verse or only a motto upon it, and sees—O horrors!—a dreadful comic valentine. A boy, dressed in soldier's clothes, and blowing on a trumpet, is represented upon it; he has a cap upon his head, which looks more like a dunce-cap than a soldier's cap, and he is puffed out all over like a balloon. (Jack is pretty fat, and it is a decided mortification to him.)

The boy is a very ugly boy indeed; he has an immense head, and a nose like a crooked-neck squash, but Jack cannot help thinking that it looks like him! He has epaulettes on his shoulders, almost exactly like those which Jack wears as captain of "Company Six." The trumpet on which he is blowing bears a striking resemblance—or at least Jack thinks it does—to the fish-horn with which Jack leads Company Six on to glory. The boy's hair is very curly. Alas! neither combing nor wetting nor cutting will take the curl out of Jack's hair, which is so unbecoming to a military man, and which brings upon him the almost unendurable disgrace of being called "Sissy Northrup" by the boys! Having fully inspected the boy, Jack turns the page, and reads the following verses:

"I am Captain Jack, of Company Six;  
I keep my men in a dreadful fix;  
I get at school most awful licks,  
Because I am a dunce, sir!

"I am Captain Jack, of the horn and drum;  
I blow my horn, and I make it hum;

You'd better believe that I am *some*,—  
For I think so myself, sir!

"I am Captain Jack, so fat and gay;  
I curl my hair up every day,  
And with the girls I love to play,  
Because I'm 'Sissy,' too, sir!"

If the boy on the outside of the valentine had made Jack angry, how did he feel when he read those verses! He wanted to keep it to himself; he did not like to have other people see it, but his wrath was too great. He rushed into the room where the family were still at breakfast, with his face very red, and his fist "doubled up."

"I say, Uncle Dick, will you help me pay him off? Will Seaver, that sent me this. I'd punch his head for him, only he's bigger than me!"

"Jack! Jack!" said his mother, reprovingly.

"Well, mamma, *can* a fellow stand that?"

Even Bess forsook her valentines to look at Jack's, and there was a laugh all round the table while Uncle Dick read the verses aloud.

"Why, that is only a joke, Jack! I wouldn't take it so hard," said his father.

And Uncle Dick, who was very full of fun, wouldn't stop laughing, and that made Jack's angry passions rise higher and higher.

"Well, I do think it is pretty mean!" said Bess, coming over to Jack's side. "To have fat and curly-haired and everything that Jack hates in it!"

"How do you know that Will Seaver sent it?" asked Uncle Dick.

Jack thought he did because he had "got above Will in spelling the day before, and that always made Will mad, because he thought he could spell everybody out of sight."

"I'll tell you one thing I am going to do to pay him," said Jack. "You know he smoked a cigar the other day, and it made him so sick, he was absent from school two days, and the boys have teased him so that he is mad if anybody says cigar to him! Now I am going to school awful early this noon, and make a snow-man in the school-yard, with a big cigar in his mouth, and put a placard on it with Will's name printed



on it in such awful big letters that you can see it from the street! Won't he feel cheap, though?"

"I guess it won't stay there long after Will gets there!" said Bess. "And I think may be you'll wish you hadn't put it there!"

"I think Will Seaver is a pretty good boy. I wouldn't quarrel with him, if I were you, Jack!" said Uncle Dick.

"Oh, that's just because you like Rose Seaver! But that a'n't any go! Didn't I hear her talking about you with Miss Jenkins, one day when I was in there? and didn't she say she thought you were a flirt, and she didn't like a man that was a flirt? And Miss Jenkins said you weren't a marrying man—and I shouldn't think you were, when you never got married once!—and she said you were an old bachelor, most thirty-five—and didn't Rose ever notice the bald spot coming on your head?—and your intentions didn't mean serious to anybody! And Rose got as red as fire, and said she never thought they did!"

Everybody laughed at Jack's frankness, and his mother reproved him for repeating remarks that he heard about people, and Uncle Dick's face grew as red as Rose Seaver's could have done.

Jack grew silent and very reserved on the subject of his valentine after that, and when breakfast was over, he drew Bess off for a little confidential interview.

"Bess, I have got a suspicion!" said he, loftily.

"Good gracious! Does it hurt you? How does it make you feel?" said Bess. (She would tease Jack when he put on airs and used big words.)

"It makes me feel like punching Uncle Dick's head!" (Jack wasn't so fierce as one would think from his talk. When he was excited he would use some slang, in spite of his mother.)

"Why Uncle Dick's?" asked Bess.

"Because I believe he sent me that valentine! Those verses sound just like him! And he is always up to something, you know!"

"I think Uncle Dick would have written better verses! But then, I don't know," said Bess, meditatively; "he *didn't* seem to want you to pay Will Seaver for it!"

"I'm sure he sent it!" said Jack decidedly. "And, oh! if I don't think up some way to be even with him! I'm going to ask Rob Ingalls to help me!"

Rob Ingalls was Jack's particular friend, and could generally be relied upon to exercise all his ability in the line of mischief.

Being taken into Jack's confidence, and shown the valentine on solemn promise of secrecy, Rob, after duly weighing the probabilities of the case, with a very solemn countenance, declared it to be his opinion that Jack's Uncle Dick was the perpetrator of the unseemly jest. But still, as it might possibly have been Will Seaver, they might as well make the snow image, with a cigar in its mouth, which Jack had proposed, and make it to look as much like Will as possible, as well as having his name on it.

A prank like that suited Rob exactly.

So each of the boys ate a hurried lunch that day, and rushed back to the school-yard. With all their efforts, the snow image did not strikingly resemble Will Seaver. I do not think the point of the joke would have been seen if they had not fastened a large piece of pasteboard, with Will Seaver's name upon it, on the snow-man's hat. The cigar in the image's mouth was a real one, of very large size, on which Jack and Rob Ingalls had spent all their spare change.

Cigars were a very delicate point to Will Seaver, and he thought that was a very mean joke indeed. Bess's prediction that it would not stay there long after Will got there proved correct. Will and one or two of his friends, who agreed with him that it was a very mean joke, "pitched into" the snow image with feet and fists, and demolished it in a very short time. Jack and Rob Ingalls went to the rescue of their precious cigar, with which they hoped to have a great deal more fun still, and in the *melee* it was thrown, together with a very large snowball, full in the face of the principal of the school, who was just coming into the yard!

After that Will Seaver was not the only boy to whom cigars were a delicate point!

Will Seaver devoted himself to thinking up a plan to make him even with Jack and Rob, while Jack tried to pay off Uncle Dick, whom he still believed to be the sender of the valentine.

"I'll tell you what I am going to do, Rob!" he said, after rejecting, one by one, Rob's suggestions, such as putting rocks in Uncle Dick's bed, sewing up his coat sleeves, and other such common devices to annoy and enrage a victim. "I want to do something uncommon, and which will tease him

awfully, you know! Because there never was anything in the world so mean as that valentine! I guess he'll never want to call me fat or curly-headed again!"

"What are you going to do?" asked Rob, impatiently.

"Well, you know Uncle Dick likes the girls an awful lot. But he just likes to be flirting round with them, and he doesn't want to marry any of them. I heard mamma say the other day that she didn't think he would marry for the world. Now I am going to make him get married! If that's what he hates most of anything, that's what I'll make him do!"

"I don't see how a feller is going to work to make his uncle get married!" said Rob. He thought he could invent tricks to play on people as well as any other "feller," but this was going beyond him.

Jack chuckled over his own smartness.

"Well, now you see if I don't make Uncle Dick get married! You know Will Seaver's sister Rose? Well, Uncle Dick flirts with her, and I think, by the way she blushed about him the other day, that she is awful sweet on him. And I am going to write a letter to her saying I am awful sweet on her, and ask her to marry me!"

"You?" demanded Rob, aghast. "You don't suppose—"

"Rob Ingalls, I thought you had a little sense! I shall sign Uncle Dick's name to it, of course. And she will answer it, and say 'yes,' I am sure; and he will get the answer, and what can he do? He won't tell her he didn't ask her! He is politer than that! He'll have to marry her!"

"But if you should get found out, wouldn't you catch it!" said Rob, who was somewhat alarmed at the greatness of the undertaking.

"I a'n't going to get found out!" said Jack; though he did wonder if it were a State's Prison offence which he proposed to commit. "You can write it for me, so if Uncle Dick ever sees it, he will know that it isn't mine, and I can say I didn't write it, if I'm asked; and you know I wouldn't tell on you, whatever happened!"

Rob did have perfect confidence that Jack would not "tell on him," and agreed to write the letter. Jack got a scrap of Uncle Dick's handwriting, that Rob might imitate it as closely as possible, and composed the letter himself. It read thus: (Spelling was not a strong point with either Jack or Rob.)

"Deer miss Rose you must hav sene for a grate wile that i was sweet on you. i hav not edzacktly bin your bo becos i hav bin bo too a grate menny gurls but it was only to conseal my feelings for you i luv you will you bee my wife. pleas anser sune or i shall dy.  
RICHARD S. EATON."

"Now that is just exactly what Uncle Dick would write! I know, because he never writes a great long letter. And she'll write back that she will be his wife, and what can he do?"

And Jack executed a kind of Indian war-dance in his delight at his own wit, and the probable success of his trick, which would amply avenge the insult offered him by that comic valentine.

He despatched the letter, and awaited the result with great anxiety.

The very next evening Uncle Dick went out, without saying where he was going. And that usually meant that he was going to call on some young lady. Jack thought it was probably Miss Rose Seaver, and decided to sit up until he returned, and see whether he looked disturbed and unhappy.

It was late—after eleven o'clock—when he came home, but Jack had been allowed, as an extraordinary privilege, to sit up. The rest of the family had retired.

When Uncle Dick came in, he looked disturbed, as if something had happened, certainly, but never had he looked happier, smiled more beamingly!

"Jack, O Jack, what a boy you are! I owe you one, and one that I'll be most happy to pay!"

Jack got up, with a feeling as if the end of the world were coming, and a very shaky sensation in his legs.

"For you've done me the best turn that I ever had done me in my life! But to have you propose to a young lady for me is an honor that I never expected! You see I had been trying to get up courage to propose to her for a long time—you'll know more about it by the time you make your second proposal, probably—ha, ha!—and couldn't do it. She showed me this," holding out the letter, "thinking that perhaps I could guess who sent it. You see, Jack, spelling and composition and all, it was too striking an effort of genius for her to think I was the author! and that broke the ice for me, and she's going to be my wife next

summer! What do you think of that, Master Jack?"

"I—I thought you didn't want to marry anybody!" stammered Jack. "Mamma said you wouldn't marry anybody for the world!"

"Mamma, it seems, didn't know much about it!" laughed Uncle Dick. "But if you thought that, what made you write that letter?"

"To pay you for the valentine!"

"The valentine? Why, I didn't send it!"

"You didn't?" said Jack, very crest-fallen. "Who did, then?"

"Well, since you have done me such a

very great kindness, I'll tell you that I strongly suspect it was Bess!"

"And she looked so innocent about it! I didn't once think of it! Well, I'll never believe in a girl again!"

Jack hasn't "got even" with Bess yet; having met with such failures in paying off two who were not guilty, he has lost heart, and so far let the guilty one go unpunished.

And when he teases Bess, she can always stop him by singing:

"I'm Captain Jack, so fat and gay;  
I curl my hair up every day,  
And with the girls I love to play,  
Because I'm 'Sissy,' too, sir!"

## JEAN MILLAUD'S COW.

Wadleigh, Frances E

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### JEAN MILLAUD'S COW.

BY FRANCES E. WADLEIGH.

"May the saints preserve us!" cried old Justine, piously crossing herself, as a fiercer blast than usual struck the house. "A worse storm has never been known on these coasts; ah, how the wind howls! Listen to the thunder!"

"And hear the waves beating on the rocks! 'T is an awful night for those at sea," said Rosette, in a low whisper.

An awful night it truly was. The wind shook the house to its very foundations; the sea roared like a wild beast searching for its prey; the thunder rolled; and the lightning flashed with scarcely any intermission, its weird brilliancy serving to make the occasional darkness only the more terrible and dense.

The two women, Justine Blanquet and

her niece, Rosette Millaud, cowered in silence over the crackling fire which illuminated as well as warmed the spacious, well-furnished kitchen in which they sat. Stretched on a lounge near the fire was the master of the house, Jean Millaud, Rosette's father; he was sleeping, but not too soundly to rouse now and then, and carp at or dispute the women's half-frightened words.

"I wish the wind would go down," said Rosette.

"Thou wouldst be wiser to wish the ill-timed lightning would cease, imbecile!" growled her father.

Presently a short, sharp whistle, thrice repeated, was heard without. Millaud jumped quickly to his feet, now wide awake,

and going to the door opened it, admitting a blast of cold, salt air, and surveyed the sky for a few seconds. Then he echoed the whistle just heard.

"O father!" exclaimed Rosette.

"Hold thy tongue! Go help thine aunt put up the shutters!" was his answer, as he disappeared into an inner room.

Scarcely had the two women finished closing and barring the solid wooden shutters on the windows which looked seaward, when he returned to the kitchen, muffled to his ears in a long, large coat, and bearing in his hand an enormous, oddly shaped lantern.

"But, my father, thou wilt not take the poor cow out to-night!" said Rosette timidly but imploringly.

"Ay, Jean, leave her in her stall just this once!" added Justine.

"A pair of brave women ye are truly," answered Jean sneeringly. "How long since thou becamest so tender-hearted, Justine? Hast thou forgotten the "Morning Star"? Hast thou forgotten the rich jewels and fine garments the wreck gave thee? Bah! A fig for women's whims!"

Lighting the lamp within the lantern, Jean sallied forth, in spite of the fierce storm that raged without, and met three men who bore small lanterns, coils of rope, and hatchets.

All night long the two women watched and prayed by the fireside. The sea boiled and surged among the rocks which lined the treacherous coast where lay the little fishing village of St. Pierre; the wind tore great branches from the largest trees and levelled many of the smaller ones, it caught up and carried the spray from the seething ocean far inland, and masses of black clouds, driven along by its fury, obscured the stars and sky. The thunder and lightning had ceased long before midnight, but it was an awful night for those at sea!

At last the pale March morning dawned. As the sun rose, the wind lessened, and when the king of day was an hour high, it had subsided into only a moderate gale.

The waves still came thundering in, dashing as wildly as ever among the rocks, but now each one brought a trophy on its bosom and laid it at the feet of the dwellers in St. Pierre, a group of whom were already gathered on the shore viewing the flotsam and jetsam. The beach was strewn with broken boxes, casks, pieces of wood so wrenched

and broken as to be quite useless save for firing, chests, and dead bodies, — for during this tempestuous night there had been a wreck on the dangerous, sunken rocks a half a mile from shore.

The lookers-on at this sad spectacle paid little heed to the corpses who lay before them: blessing the saints for thus kindly providing for them, they gathered up all the boxes, casks, and so forth, that each wave landed near them, and hastened with them to a place of safety.

Rosette and Justine were there; like a few other women of the town they held aloof from the spoil, and gazed pitifully upon their lifeless visitors.

"See!" cried Rosette. "That is surely a little child! I must go to it, *pauvre petite!*"

And picking their way carefully over the wet stones and among the debris which surrounded them, Rosette and Justine hastened to the spot where the child lay. Fancying they discovered signs of life, they lifted it from its hard bed, and carried it to their own home, not far distant.

The little waif rewarded their strenuous efforts to restore it to this sublunary sphere by suddenly opening a pair of bright blue eyes, and asking some question in an unknown tongue. A prettier fairy was never seen in all St. Pierre than this blue-eyed, golden-haired maiden, landed on their coast that tempestuous night; she was apparently about five years old; was unable to speak a word of French, but chatted volubly in an unknown language which even the *cure*, understanding a little German and less English, could not comprehend, and was clad in simply made garments whose material was destitute of mark or clew of any kind whatever.

St. Pierre looked upon her as a gift from the Virgin, for, they argued, could anything short of a direct miracle have kept the delicate creature alive through wind and wave and jagged rock that awful night? So she was christened Marie; she looked around her with such surprise when she was taken to mass the morning after her arrival in St. Pierre; she showed such a lamentable ignorance of the use of holy water and the sign of the cross, that the good *cure* felt sure she was either heretic or heathen and therefore unbaptized.

Jean Millaud would have refused to keep this little sea-treasure: but for once, the first time in his life, he was compelled to

yield his will to that of his aunt and daughter; and Marie remained.

A few months after her arrival in St. Pierre she left those barren shores and went to A—— with Rosette, who had married a young mechanic of that town. Here she lived happily until she was twelve years old, growing up as Rosette's own child, and equally idolized by her and her husband, Victor Nisard. With the years, her beauty only increased; at twelve she was taller than any of her comrades, and her face, rose-leaf complexion, her bright, deep blue eyes, and abundant golden hair, made her the envy of half the women in her neighborhood; many a one would have given a year's earnings to have been the mother of such a blonde instead of the sallow brunettes which peopled the town.

Victor Nisard was a skilled artisan, industrious, temperate and in high favor with his employers. None of his comrades, therefore, were surprised that he was the one chosen when a London firm sent to A—— for the best enameler that could be found. He moved to London, with his wife, their three children and Marie, the autumn that the latter was supposed to be nearly thirteen, seven years and a half after her unexpected arrival in St. Pierre.

One winter in the dark, smoky city was enough for the Nisards; in the spring they rented a tiny little cottage in Kensington. Here Rosette found plenty of employment at her trade, lace cleaning; for, like many French women, she, as well as her husband, worked diligently to fill the family coffers. Among the patrons was Sir Jasper Claight's large family of daughters, and these ladies speedily became enamored of Marie, who was usually sent to return or fetch the lace.

"How unlike most French girls you are, Marie!" said Edith Claight. "One would surely think you English."

"Yes," interposed Laura, "or a German."

"I am neither English, German nor French," answered Marie. "I do not know where I was born."

A few questions drew from her the little she knew of her early history, and her strange tale did not lessen the interest her auditors took in her. They persuaded Mabel Downham, the governess, to teach her English, of which she was totally ignorant, and allow her to visit the school-room for an hour every day to talk French with the

younger Clights. Like every one else who knew her, Mabel Downham became very much attached to Marie, and took pleasure in instructing her; the English lessons were less difficult than one might have supposed; perhaps her native tongue was more like it than French, Mabel thought.

And now a word about the governess, for hers was almost as romantic a history as Marie's. Until her sixteenth year she had been the only child of loving parents who were able as well as willing to indulge her every whim; then her father died, and his widow, through her husband's carelessness, and his agent's dishonesty, found herself penniless. At eighteen Mabel entered Sir Jasper's family as governess, and remained there until the time of which I write; eight years, that is to say.

When she took upon herself this duty she little thought that it would endure so long. She was engaged to Geoffrey Reynolds, and expected to marry him as soon as his success in his profession of medicine would permit. Scarcely had she become accustomed to her new home and her pupils when she became heiress to her uncle Harold Downham's wealth by the sudden death of his only child. This uncle, who died shortly after her father did, left her nothing absolutely. In the event of his child's death while yet a minor, or of his widow's second marriage, Mabel was to inherit all his property, with these conditions: She was never to marry a foreigner, a Roman Catholic, or a lawyer; nor was she ever to reside out of England. If she did either of these, the property was to pass to a distant kinsman.

Geoffrey Reynolds, in spite of his name, was not an Englishman. He and his father (who was son of a staunch Briton) were born in Paris, as were his mother and grandmother, and all their ancestors: he was also a Roman Catholic. He therefore would not be a suitable husband for Mabel if she desired to retain her uncle's riches. He was an upright, honorable man, and loved Mabel sincerely and devotedly: but he, as well as she, was poor, and had no prospect of being otherwise for many a weary year; and therefore he told Mabel, that for her sake, for her own future good, their engagement must be broken.

Mabel could not be convinced that such a proceeding was wise or desirable.

"What is money," she asked, "in com-

parison with his love? Would not a life of poverty with him be infinitely sweeter than gilded solitude?"

Neither could convince the other. After many long and earnest arguments,—for both had strong wills,—they at last quarreled and separated. Geoffrey went his way, and Mabel hers; and they had never met again until the time of which I write. Each thought that the other would eventually regard the matter in a different light, and that some day they might be friends if nothing more.

Firm in her determination to prove that money was not, to her, the only good this world contained, Mabel refused to appropriate one penny of her rightful inheritance, but continued to act as Sir Jasper's governess.

So the weary years had passed. The lovers had held no communication, and had long ago lost sight of one another. Geoffrey, thinking that Mabel was luxuriating in her riches, had returned to his native land, and was slowly but surely rising in his profession. He was still unmarried; and his heart often ached for a line, a word, from Mabel: but he suffered in silence, and gave no sign.

Mr. Downham's widow had married a former lover, Harry Wescombe, soon after her husband's death, and was now living in Kensington, quite near Sir Jasper's residence. Her first husband had been a tyrant, and she could not grieve at his death: her father, using deceit as well as cajolery, had sold her to him, and the only brightness she had known in the five years that intervened between her marriage-day and that which made her a widow had been shed by her only child Lillian, the one whose demise made Mabel an unwilling heiress.

The only cloud on Mrs. Wescombe's life was the thought of this little daughter. Her three children were sturdy boys. Had one of them been a girl, perhaps she would have effaced from her mother's heart some of the bitter sorrow she felt for the lost Lillian.

Mabel was very fond of the Wescombes, and often visited them. One day she took a fancy that Mrs. Wescombe might like little Marie to teach young Harry French, so she asked the girl to go with her to visit her aunt.

Marie was always glad to accompany

Miss Mabel; although, as Mrs. Wescombe was not a proficient in her language, nor she in English, she did not anticipate much pleasure in her society.

"See, Aunt Anna!" exclaimed Mabel, "I have brought my little French girl to visit you."

Mrs. Wescombe welcomed her kindly, and, holding her hand, said,—

"How much like my sister Lillian you are! If she had lived, I could fancy you to be her child. How old are you, my dear?"

"About thirteen, I believe."

"Don't you know? How odd! But I suppose your young compatriots do not celebrate their birthdays as English children do."

"They celebrate their name-day more than that of their birth," explained Mabel. "Marie was christened on the twentieth day of March, so she celebrates that as her *fete*."

Once again Mrs. Wescombe alluded to the girl's great resemblance to the dead Lillian, saying,—

"The likeness is truly wonderful. I wish mamma could see you, Marie. Had you any English ancestors? It is possible that there may be some distant connexion between us."

"Alas, madame! I do not know. The cruel sea washed me up on the rocks at St. Pierre; and Rosette Minaud, my only mother now, saved my life: she has been so good."

"What does she mean, Mabel?" inquired Mrs. Wescombe, still holding fast to Marie's hand.

So Mabel told the tale, which Rosette had more than once repeated to her, of the awful storm at St. Pierre, the corpse-strewn coast, and the little blue-eyed waif. To Mabel's surprise, Mrs. Wescombe said that the tale interested her, and she would like to question this Rosette about it. She accompanied Marie home, and Rosette willingly enough repeated the story.

"Had the little one no trinkets by which you would be able to identify her? no garments?" asked Mrs. Wescombe.

"Surely! On one of her sweet little fingers she wore a ring, with 'Lillian' engraved in it. She had a gold chain and locket on too: the locket held a lock of her father's hair, and had his name engraved on the outside."

"Harold Downham?" asked Mrs. Wescombe.

"Yes," answered Marie. "Do you know him?"

"How wicked some men can be!" sighed Rosette. "My father — ah! madame, you will blame me, but I am innocent — called himself a fisherman. We lived on the western coast of France, where the shores were very rocky and dangerous. We had a cow — poor, harmless beast! — who caused many a shipwreck" —

"A shipwreck? Caused by a cow?"

"Yes, madame. My father and one or two other wicked men would take the poor beast down to the water's edge on a stormy night, and, tying a very large lantern to her horns, would lead her up and down, up and down, through all the dark, stormy hours. She would toss her head, trying to dislodge her strange head-gear; and sailors, far out at sea, would see this light rocking back and forth, and, thinking it some vessel riding securely at anchor, would guide their course by it, and, drawing near, suddenly strike treacherous sunken rocks, and in the morning our shore would be strewn with all sorts of things, — some valuable, some worthless, — and with corpses. If any poor creature landed there alive, he never had a chance to tell his tale; the men of St. Pierre did not kill him, — oh, no! but he died, died for want of care. The child was the only thing they suffered to live; and she was so fair."

"Why do you call her Marie?" asked Mabel. "You say the ring was marked 'Lilian.'"

So Rosette explained how and why she was baptized.

"Have you those trinkets here?" asked Mrs. Wescombe.

Rosette produced them; and Mrs. Wescombe opened the locket with trembling fingers, and, touching a hidden spring, caused an inner compartment to open, disclosing her own picture and that of her first husband. Embracing Marie, and kissing her rapturously, she exclaimed, —

"My Lilian! my child! The sea has given up its dead."

"Aunt Anna!" exclaimed Mabel, "are you sure? Oh! if it is she, that cursed money will no longer oppress me."

Rosette looked curious, — nay, suspicious; so Mrs. Wescombe said, —

"Let me tell you my history, and how I

came to lose my child. My present husband and I were lovers almost from our cradles; but my father disliked him, and eagerly accepted Mr. Downham's proposals for my hand. I disliked Harold Downham exceedingly. I refused flatly to so much as consider his proposal; but after two years of annoyance and persecution, having been convinced that my youthful lover had forgotten me, and married another, I consented to become his wife. We were married in haste, two weeks after my consent had been wrung from me; and I had plenty of leisure to repent. My husband was generous — nay, prodigal — as far as money was concerned; but, beyond that, I believe he did not possess a single virtue. My married life, fortunately very brief, was a purgatory upon earth. Mr. Downham was most unreasonably jealous; and fearing lest I might marry Mr. Wescombe — whose reported marriage was a groundless falsehood — after his death, made his will as soon as my little girl was born, and left all his immense wealth to me, in trust for her, so long as I should remain a widow. If, however, I married again, she and his property were to be taken from me for seven years. At the expiration of that time, if the child still lived, she might choose her home. Mr. Downham took me to Sweden a few weeks after my Lilian was born, and there we lived for four years; and then we went to Havana, where he died almost as soon as we landed. Then — well, I lost my baby, my Lilian! and returned to England to marry Mr. Wescombe, and know the happiest years of my life.

"Of course I forfeited Mr. Downham's money. The next heir was his grand-niece, Miss Downham, who stands before you.

"I was in great haste to leave Havana, and get back to England; so eight years ago last March" —

"Yes, yes!" cried Rosette: "that was the time."

"We took passage in a vessel bound for Southampton. We had a very tempestuous journey, and one night our good ship struck on sunken rocks. We took to the boats; and disregarding the captain's advice, and many kind offers of assistance from my companions, I held Lilian in my arms for hours. I was weak from long-continued sickness; and suddenly a fiercer wave than usual robbed me of my child, carrying her completely out of my arms; and, as I sup-



posed, she lost her life in the pitiless, boiling waves."

"Ah!" exclaimed Rosette; "but the blessed Virgin bore the dear child in her arms, and laid her safely on our shores. But she spoke a strange tongue" —

"Yes; Swedish. She knew no other, — her father would not let her learn English; nor would he allow her to be baptized."

Marie was indeed the lost Lillian. Her identity was proven, even to the satisfaction of English law. And Mabel Downham only too gladly yielded up all claim to her cousin's wealth. Marie's guardians and trustees were of their ward's opinion, — that Mabel was justly entitled to at least a small portion of the riches she might have used or squandered, — and compelled her to accept enough to enable her to live in comfort without the drudgery of teaching as a governess.

Victor (who had been both father and brother to Marie) and Rosette were amply rewarded for their kindness to the little sea-maiden, and never regretted their care of her.

How does news travel? How does the

wind travel? Geoffrey Reynolds had not heard from Mabel for five long years; but *no sooner had Harold Downham's property* passed from his niece's possession to that of his daughter, than Geoffrey, in his distant home in the south of France, heard the news. With his knowledge of Mabel's voluntary poverty, and her present inability to ever claim or enjoy the wealth that had separated them, came an overpowering revival of his love for her. Determined to make one effort for happiness, he crossed the Channel, and threw himself at her feet, — not in vain.

Over the nursery fireplace in Geoffrey Reynolds's happy home there hangs a picture of a sleek, calm cow. Baby Marie loves it, and tries to repeat her mother's words, —

"Jean Millaud's Cow."

When she is older, she will know that her parents' present joy and comfort, as well as her own existence, are in a measure due to that very cow, under the guidance and overruling power of Him who knows how to bring good out of evil, and sunshine from the darkest cloud.

# KATY'S AMBITION:

—OR,—

## A NIGHT AND A DAY.

BY RETT WINWOOD.

KATY CLARK stood by the pasture-bars, idly resting her milkpail on the topmost rail, watching the sun go down.

She was a wonderfully pretty creature, this Katy Clark. She had big melting brown eyes, a red ripe strawberry-colored mouth, and a face like a picture, over which the wanton wind tossed curls of flossy silken hair, as if it delighted to revel in such luxuriance.

A girl well calculated to warm the coldest heart. Looking at her, you felt that it would be a pleasure to take her in your arms and shelter her there and caress her. Not that Katy was used to caresses and loving words. O no! There was scant time for such foolishness in the red farmhouse of her Aunt Martha, where nearly all her life had been spent.

It had been a work-all-day existence thus far. But Katy would not have minded that so much—though she *did* long for leisure to read, and think, and study, and make something better than a drudge of herself. But when it came to harsh words, and an utter dearth of those little kindnesses which even the poorest may offer, her heart rebelled a little.

As she faced the western sky, the farmhouse was right there before her, half hidden in a grove of maples. She hated the very sight of its ugly red walls—hated them for the very reason that we all detest some particular places—namely, because we have been unhappy there.

Aunt Martha was the cause of Katy's unhappiness. It was she, with her sharp tongue and shrewish ways, who had scolded and fretted the brightness out of the poor child's life.

She heaved a deep sigh as she stood there balancing the milkpail on the bars. It had scarcely passed her lips when a mellow whistle sounded in the lane, and a handsome young fellow came hurrying towards her.

"A penny for your thoughts, Katy," he said, gayly.

She turned, her face brightening perceptibly at sight of him.

"They were not worth it," she answered.

"I am not sure of that. I wish you would tell me of what you were thinking."

"It would be of no use."

She smiled, a trifle bitterly, as she spoke. The young man noticed this, and became grave in an instant.

"I see how it is," he said, between his teeth. "Mrs. Clark has been ill-treating you again. That woman ought to be ashamed of herself."

"It has been no worse than usual to-day, Rob. But I have been thinking it all over, here by myself. And I always get low-spirited when I do that, you know."

"No wonder."

"Aunt Martha isn't the worst woman in the world. Perhaps I ought to be thankful for the privilege of finding a home with her, just as she says."

Robert Graham gave a contemptuous gesture of dissent.

"Not when she makes a slave of you, Katy. It's a burning shame, I tell you. And if I were rich this shouldn't go on another day."

"But you are not rich, Rob."

"No," he said, gloomily.

Then his head dropped on his breast. It had long been a dream of his to make Katy Clark his wife. But it looked as if this dream would wait long for its realization, since he had beggared himself to get through college, and was still studying law in the village.

Years must elapse before he could hope to be able to support a wife.

His face whitened as he thought of this, for Katy had another suitor—Oscar Dunlap. And Oscar was a rich man, and could give her at once all the luxuries she craved.

"O, it is hard—it is very hard!" he muttered.

She looked at him dreamily, not more than half comprehending.

"What is hard, Rob?"

"Can't you guess? Haven't you seen how madly I love you, darling?"

"Hush!" she whispered, putting up her hand.

But he would not be stopped.

"I have tried to keep my secret, though even a child might have guessed it," he went on, excitedly. "I have kept my tongue quiet, at any rate. But now I must speak or die."

"Hush!" she said again, very pale now.

"You must hear me, Katy. Let me tell you how I have been struggling, hoping and praying. O, I have longed so madly to take you away from this hateful spot and surround you with just such luxuries as your nature craves. I have been tempted to curse my poverty sometimes."

"O don't, don't, Rob!"

She set down the pail, and put up both hands before her face. A tremor seized on every limb. She had sometimes thought that this bright young fellow liked her. But she had never dreamed of such passions as he was now manifesting.

It was something new and strange to know that she was beloved. And yet a keen bitter pain came with the knowledge.

Rob drew her closely to his side.

"Look up," he whispered. "Promise to wait for me, and be true to me, and our dream shall be realized yet. I will work for you as man never worked for sweetheart yet."

She struggled clear of his embrace, and stood panting before him.

"It can never be," she gasped. "I can never be your wife."

"O Katy, Katy!"

"I mean what I say." And she angrily dashed the hair out of her eyes. "I know you will despise me, and call me mean and mercenary, but I cannot help it."

There was a minute's silence; and then Rob managed to say:

"Why can you not marry me?"

He had meant to ask, "Why will you not wait?" But it did not matter; Katy answered the unspoken question quite as much as the other.

"I am tired of this sort of life," she cried, passionately. "I should die if I had to go on enduring it, year after year, until you were rich enough to marry me. I should die, Rob! And you might never be rich, after all."

"True," he answered, in a changed voice.

He was thinking of Oscar Dunlap, but was too proud to speak his name. "What will you do?" he asked, when he could command himself sufficiently to speak.

"I don't know," wearily.

At this instant a shrill voice sounded from the direction of the farmhouse. "Katy! Katy! Where on earth are you dawdling now?"

The girl caught up her milkpail.

"It is Aunt Martha. I must go."

She was off like an arrow, not stopping once to look behind her. Mrs. Clark met her at the kitchen door—a grim hard-featured woman, who seemed to have put aside all the pleasant follies of youth, long enough since.

"You've been long enough to have milked a dozen times, Katy Clark," she said, in a shrill sharp voice. "That good-for-nothing Rob Graham has been dawdling around again, I'll warrant. I do wish the fellow would go about his business, and not keep coming here to turn your silly head."

Katy answered not a word, but pushed towards the pantry door with her brimming pail.

"Give that to me," cried Mrs. Clark, taking the pail from her hand. "And do you go and put on another dress."

"Why?" Katy ventured to ask.

"Oscar Dunlap is coming over this evening."

The grim smile that curled Mrs. Clark's thin lips told the girl on what errand Mr. Dunlap must be coming. A tinge of crimson rushed into her face and then receded, leaving her quite pale again.

But she went silently up stairs to her little bedroom and donned a blue and white lawn, that was her most becoming dress.

"If Oscar Dunlap asks me to marry him, I shall consent," she muttered, between close-shut teeth. "Aunt Martha wishes it; and I'm tired of holding out, and tired of drudging."

She glided back to the kitchen, looking very much like a ghost, in spite of her sudden decision.

What that decision cost her she did not realize herself at the time.

Mrs. Clark lighted up the front room, and sent her in there to sit. And presently, a full hour after dark, Oscar Dunlap made his appearance.

He was a dark saturnine-looking man of thirty-five or forty. Nobody liked or re-

spected him very much. Mrs. Clark was one of his warmest friends; but the fact of his wealth attached her to him, and no merit of his own.

Katy was sitting by the window when he came in. She could not repress a shiver as he approached her, and dropped one of his thin tigerish hands over her own.

"Well met, Miss Katy," he said, softly.

She turned away her head. And just then her glance wandered out at the window, and fell upon a man's figure standing in the road, not more than half a dozen rods away—a figure that was distinctly visible, for the moon was at its full, and lighted up the landscape with almost the radiance of day.

A low cry fell from her lips. "It is Rob," she thought, and almost said it aloud. "He must have seen Mr. Dunlap come in."

Her companion leaned over her and looked sharply in her face.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"Humph! Do young ladies cry out for nothing, Miss Katy?"

Then he laughed at his own wit; but the poor girl felt too sick at heart to answer him.

"You have not asked what brought me here to-night," he said, presently.

She still remained silent.

"Mrs. Clark knew that I was coming," he went on. "And I have her full approval in what I am about to do."

She stirred and shivered, and at last faltered, "Indeed."

"Yes. Please let me come to the point at once, Katy. I love you, and have come over on purpose to ask you to be my wife. Will you?"

This was abrupt enough, in all conscience. There was none of the pathos and earnestness with which Rob had spoken. But Katy felt glad of that; she felt glad to have it all over so easily and quietly.

Her hand trembled, but she put it in Mr. Dunlap's. "I will be your wife, since you wish it," she said.

Of course she had to endure a few caresses after that. There was no doubt but that Mr. Dunlap really loved her as well as he was capable of loving anybody. He staid two good hours before rising to take his departure.

His retreating footsteps had scarcely died away before a sharp tap came upon the

window-pane. Katy looked up with a start, and saw a very white face glued against the glass.

"O Rob, Rob!" she cried, "is it you?"

"Yes, it is I," he answered, savagely. "Open the window."

She raised the sash. He thrust in one of his quivering hands as she did so, and caught her arm in a vicelike grip.

"Katy," he said, in a hoarse voice, "you must tell me what that man wanted here to-night."

She was frightened. She had never seen Rob like that before. She scarcely knew what to do or say.

"What man?" she gasped.

"You know very well whom I mean—Oscar Dunlap."

That cruel grip tightened on her arm and forced the truth from her.

"He asked me to marry him, Rob."

"And you?"

"I have given him my promise."

That hand dropped to his side like lead. He staggered backward a step or two, and groaned aloud.

Then he swung on his heel. "Have a care, Katy Clark," he said, between his teeth, as he strode away. "I love you better than life or honor. I will kill that man rather than give you up to him!"

He was out of sight in an instant. Katy gasped, and threw out both her arms in a pleading gesture, but only the white moonlight and the familiar landscape was there before her.

Rob was nowhere to be seen.

She called to him once or twice, in a very faint voice, but he returned no answer. A silence as of the grave seemed to have settled all around her, of a sudden.

Then she sat still and thought over the last words he had spoken, and the savage intonation of his voice; and, thinking of them, she grew terribly frightened.

"He meant what he said," she moaned.

"I have driven him desperate. He *will* murder Mr. Dunlap if they encounter each other."

It was a dreadful thought. Not that the life of her promised husband was so very precious to her; but she did care that Rob should stain his hands in blood and his soul in crime.

Aunt Martha had gone to bed long before. Not a soul was stirring in the house. Katy got up quickly and threw a shawl over her head.

It had suddenly occurred to her that both Rob and Oscar Dunlap were likely to take the same route to the village, which lay two miles away. What if the former should overtake the latter this night, while blood was up?

She was nearly frantic with the thought. "Good Heaven!" she cried, "I shall go mad if anything happens."

She fled from the house, and along the road Oscar Dunlap had taken. The white splendor of the moonlight lay all around her; on the hazy hills, the odorous meadows, the dark green forests, and the dusty road. It was a lovely scene, peaceful as a dream of Eden—fair as a glimpse of paradise.

But poor Katy Clark gave no thought to its beauty as she fled on and on, with a terrible fear wringing her very heartstrings.

She entered a lonesome wood, at last. At another time the strange solitude and silence would have daunted her, somewhat. But now she never minded them.

"I must overtake one or the other of them soon," she moaned.

At this point the road wound along the edge of a gully, at the bottom of which a small stream of water bawled over the rocks. The trees were further apart, and the patches of silvery moonlight whiter and larger, and much more frequent.

Suddenly she came to a standstill. Some dark object lay in the road right before her. She stooped and picked it up.

"It is a man's hat—Rob's hat!" she cried, holding it up in the moonlight, that she might scrutinize it more closely.

She flung it from her, and burst into a passion of tears. One conclusion, and only one, could be drawn from the fact of finding the hat there.

A struggle must have occurred on the spot. When she had succeeded in calming herself somewhat she looked around.

Sure enough, the dust of the wood was marked with footprints, and the bushes growing on either side had been trampled and broken down.

Katy felt ready to faint on making this discovery. But she managed to control herself. Running for the hat she had thrown aside, she squeezed and kissed it passionately, and finally pinned it to her dress.

"O Rob, Rob!" she murmured. "No other eyes than mine shall ever see this! Nobody shall ever be told where I found it!

Surely I may do this much for you."

A low groan reached her ears just at this instant. She started and clasped both hands over her heart. The groan was repeated. It came from the gully!

Was Oscar lying there—or could it be Robert Graham?

After a moment's hesitation she approached the precipitous bank and began to descend. It was steep, but there were plenty of bushes to hang on by, and she managed to reach the bottom.

There, lying among the sedgy grasses, within three feet of the water's edge, was the dark motionless figure of a man.

Katy started towards it, as it lay bathed in the clear moonlight. It was Oscar Dunlap. She dropped her hand over his heart. A very faint pulsation made itself perceptible. An involuntary cry of horror rose to her lips as she comprehended his situation. He must have been tumbled from the bank above; and had he fallen a hand's breadth to the right or left—on the rocks, or in the water, or anywhere, in fact, save among those sedgy grasses—the result must have been certain death.

It was a trying moment for the poor girl. But she was equal to the emergency. Lifting Oscar's head in her arms, she began to bathe his temples with cold water from the stream near by.

He moved and moaned a little, and that was all. The poor child hung over him in speechless distress. "Don't die! for Heaven's sake, don't die!" was the prayer of her heart; but she had no power to utter it.

While she hung over him in utter despair, her hand struck against some protruding object in his coat pocket. She groped for it, and found a small bottle, half filled with some dark liquid, which had been uninjured by his fall.

"Brandy!" she ejaculated, giving vent to a hysterical cry, as she smelled its contents. It seemed as if Heaven itself had interfered in her behalf. She kissed the bottle frantically, then raised it to the helpless man's lips, and let drop after drop flow over them.

For two mortal hours she sat there, holding Oscar's head in her lap, and administering the brandy at brief intervals. They were such hours as she will not forget to her dying day.

At last he opened his eyes, and became sensible enough to recognize her.

"O Katy," he whispered, "why are you here?"

"I came to save your life," she answered.

He lay quite still, looking up at her for many minutes. Then a spasm of pain contracted his white face.

"I'm a dead man," he moaned. "I shall never get over this."

"Hush!" whispered Katy. "You must not talk. Lie still, and call back your strength as fast as possible."

She continued to feed him with the brandy while another hour went by. Then she roused him.

"Get up, Mr. Dunlap, and try to walk."

"What are you going to do?"

"Take you to the nearest house."

He raised himself, moaning with pain the while. Katy produced the bottle.

"Take another swallow of brandy, and we will set out," she said. "You can lean as heavily upon me as you choose."

He stood still and looked at her. "Why don't you leave me here and go for help?" he asked, sharply.

"Because I do not wish to."

Then she gently laid his arm on her shoulder, and led him onward a few steps; not up the precipitous bank—that would have been a hopeless undertaking; but along its base.

She knew that the ground rose gradually further on, and the ascent would be comparatively easy.

It was a slow and toilsome journey, for he was very weak; but they were surely nearing the road, when Katy stopped of a sudden.

"Before we go any further," she said, in a very low voice, "I have a promise to extort from you."

Mr. Dunlap seemed surprised. "What is it?" he demanded.

"You must give me your solemn word never to reveal—"

She choked, and could not go on for a minute.

"Well?" he said, impatiently.

"You must not reveal the part Robert Graham has played in this night's work."

The dreadful words were out at last. Mr. Dunlap stood and stared at her for a moment or two in utter silence. Then a light broke over his face.

"Ah," he muttered, "I always knew you were fond of that rascal, Katy. And now I see how it is! It was concern for Rob,

and not for me, that brought you to this spot to-night."

The last words died in a growl. But Katy did not mind that.

"Are you willing to give the promise I demand?" she asked.

"No," he answered, savagely.

She grew white as a water-lily in the moonlight. "Then I shall leave you here to find succor as best you may," she said, in a low firm voice.

The man muttered a curse. Then he seemed to ponder; and at last he drew closer to Katy's side.

"I promise," he muttered. "It is certain death to be left here alone."

Then they toiled on again. They were in the wood at last. Katy did not turn her steps towards the farmhouse. That was very far away. But a neat little villa stood just beyond the wood, where some rich people from the city were spending the summer. Katy resolved to go there with her charge.

It was a Dr. Thurstone who owned the villa, she had been told; and Mr. Dunlap sadly needed a physician's care. That fact alone was enough to have decided her.

It seemed like an age before they reached the house; and another age ere the servant who answered their summons could be made to comprehend what had happened.

Then lights began to glow in the darkened windows, and presently a pleasant voice said:

"Come in. Let me be the poor fellow's staff, young lady. You look tired out."

A mist swam before Katy's eyes. She saw dimly, as one in a dream, a noble-looking man of about fifty, half leading half dragging Oscar Dunlap over the floor; she saw a sweet-faced woman on the stairs, and heard her ask:

"What has happened? What is the matter, Ernest?"

Then the mist deepened to utter darkness, and her senses quite forsook her.

When she came to herself again, she was lying on a couch in the handsomest bedroom she had ever seen; and the sweet-faced lady was leaning over her with restoratives.

"Where am I?" she asked, raising herself on one elbow.

"With friends," was the assuring answer. "Lie still, dear, until you are stronger."

"And Mr. Dunlap?"

"The gentleman who was hurt? He fainted, too. But my husband thinks he will soon be better. There, don't talk any more."

The soothing touch of the lady's delicate hand was not without its effect. Katy fell asleep, and it was broad daylight when she awoke again.

Mrs. Thurstone was with her still. Katy pressed her hand gratefully. "You are very good," she murmured.

"O no. You shall tell me all about yourself when you are better."

Katy thought she had never known anybody so kind and pleasant. She lay watching Mrs. Thurstone with a longing wistful look in her brown eyes.

Suddenly she started up. "I ought to go home!" she exclaimed.

"Where is your home, my child?"

"I live at a farmhouse, more than a mile away, with my Aunt Martha."

"What is your name?"

"Katy Clark."

"Katy!" repeated Mrs. Thurstone.

Katy looked around at her. How white she had grown!

"Yes, madam." Then she went swiftly up to the cheval glass, a sudden thought striking her. "Good heavens!" she exclaimed, all in a tremor. "What does it mean?"

"What does *what* mean?"

For answer, Katy seized hold of Mrs. Thurstone's hand, and led her up to the glass.

"Look there!" she cried, excitedly. "See how strangely we resemble each other!"

Mrs. Thurstone did look. It was true. The two white faces reflected in the glass were wonderfully like.

The same brown flossy hair; the same brown eyes; even the red ripe little mouth was repeated over again. The only difference was that one face looked older than the other.

Mrs. Thurstone grew whiter and whiter. At last she turned and flung the door wide.

"Ernest! Ernest!" she screamed.

Dr. Thurstone came hurrying into the room. "What is it?" he asked.

Then he stood as if rooted to the spot, and stared at the two. For some minutes not a word was spoken in the room. At last he found voice again.

"Wife, wife," he cried, "this girl is the

perfect picture of what our Katy would have been."

"Yes," said Mrs. Thurstone, faintly.

"I believe it is she!"

"My name is Katy," said the girl, looking sore perplexed.

"Where do you live?"

"With Aunt Martha Clark, at—"

A scream from Mrs. Thurstone interrupted her. "That name—Martha Clark! It is, it is our Katy!"

Then she flung her arms round Katy's neck and clung there convulsively, and a man's strong arm encircled them both, and a musical voice murmured rapturously:

"My wife—my child!"

Katy felt bewildered and sadly at a loss; but she felt, too, that it was all true. She could not see how, exactly. But the explanation came a little later.

Martha Clark had lived with Dr. and Mrs. Thurstone as nurse-maid, years and years before, in New Orleans. Katy was then about eighteen months old—an only child. Some trouble had arisen, and Martha was accused of theft and some other peccadilloes. Dr. Thurstone at once ordered her to quit the house.

She went away. A week later little Katy was missing, and not a trace of her could be found. Martha Clark was known to be revengeful. Suspicion at once fastened itself upon her. But she had disappeared so silently and mysteriously that nothing could be learned concerning her.

It now appeared that she had returned to her early home in Connecticut, where she had palmed off Katy as the child of her brother who had died in the West Indies.

But all this came out by degrees.

Katy could not doubt, however, but that she had really found her parents. It seemed very strange, and very delightful, for she had been taught by Martha Clark to believe them dead.

I need not speak in detail of the next hour. Of course the three found much to say to each other. At last Katy rose up suddenly.

"I must leave you for a little while," she faltered.

She hurried away before her new-found parents could make any remonstrance, and went straight to the village. Her heart was full of tears for Rob's safety; she could not rest until he had been warned of his peril.

She found him in the office, poring over some law books. He looked pale, but his whole face brightened at sight of her. He darted towards her, and held out both his hands eagerly.

"Katy," he cried, "you must have relented, or you would not seek me here."

She waved him back.

"I have come to warn you to fly," she answered, wildly. "O Rob, go, go at once! It may be too late in another hour."

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "Why am I to fly?"

She wrung her hands and sobbed:

"O Rob, Rob! You are cruel to feign ignorance to me. Oscar Dunlap was assaulted and nearly murdered in the Crofton woods last night. The news will spread all over the village in an hour's time."

He grew a shade paler, and caught at the wall for support.

"What is this to me?" he asked, after a pause. "Good Heaven, Katy, you don't suspect me of having a hand in this business?"

"Fly, fly!" she cried, excitedly. "I made Mr. Dunlap promise not to tell on you. But he is not to be trusted. He may break his word at any moment. O, I entreat you to fly before it is too late."

Her wild words revealed all her fears. Rob caught his breath sharply. After a moment's hesitation he stepped nearer to her, his handsome face all aflame.

"I will not fly! Before God, I am innocent, Katy; and that cowardly villain could tell you so, if he were so disposed."

She unrolled a little bundle she had brought with her, and took out the crumpled hat that had been picked up in the wood.

"Is this yours, Rob?"

"No," he answered, readily. "It is like one I wore last night, but not the same. See, here is mine."

He took it down from a peg on the wall, and placed it beside the other.

Katy uttered a quick cry; but could not speak.

"I did not come home through the Crofton woods," Rob went on, "but took the longer route through the fields. To tell the truth, I dared not trust myself with Dunlap after what had happened. So I avoided all risk of a meeting by taking the roundabout way home."

He seemed to have spoken truly. Katy

was nearly wild with distress and doubt. She tried to speak, and could not—burst into a flood of hysterical tears, and fled from the office.

Back along the country road she hastened. A woman's figure loomed up suddenly before her. It was Martha Clark.

"And so I've found you, you trollop!" shrieked the woman, angrily. "Tell me this instant where you have been dawdling all the blessed night. Tell me, I say!"

She would have seized Katy roughly by the shoulder, but the girl eluded her.

"I have been with my parents," she answered, haughtily. "I have been with Dr. Thurstone and his wife, from whom you stole me in New Orleans."

The words told. Martha Clark's hard face grew livid with fright.

"And so it is the same Dr. Thurstone?" she faltered. "I would not believe it. I meant to marry you to Dunlap before anything was found out."

"I know it," said Katy.

Then she darted off, and left the woman standing in the road like one confounded.

Oscar Dunlap was calling for her when she reached Dr. Thurstone's villa. She went into the room where he lay, and approached the bed.

"You have deceived me," she exclaimed. "It was not Robert Graham who assaulted you last night."

"It was Robert Graham!" he asserted, stoutly.

"I do not believe it."

"But you will when the officers of justice have him in custody."

Poor Katy screamed out at that, for the picture filled her with horror. Dunlap laughed in his slow blood-curdling way.

"I have been thinking over this matter," he said. "There is evidence enough to convict Graham any day. You hold his future in your hands, Katy."

"How?" she faltered.

"Marry me within the hour, and he is forever safe, so far as I am concerned. But I will spare him on no other condition."

She looked into that dark pitiless face and trembled. Rob had refused to fly. It was useless to hold out with this man. For Rob's sake she could do anything.

"I consent," she said, in a very low voice.

"Dr. Thurstone will send for a clergyman."



Mr. Dunlap did not know that Dr. Thurstone was her father. She went away, leaving the villain chuckling softly to himself. He seemed to think he was playing a very shrewd game.

Katy crept down stairs to the drawing-room, where her parents were sitting. She was white as a ghost, and her eyes were blinded by tears.

"I'm going to marry Mr. Dunlap," she said, abruptly.

She dropped wearily into a chair, and tried to tell just enough of her story to gain their consent. In the midst of the recital a great outcry was made in the chamber overhead, and a servant came rushing down the stairs.

"Mr. Dunlap has burst a bloodvessel!" he shouted.

"Just Heaven!"

An instant later Dr. Thurstone was bending over his patient, and Katy stood near the door, looking anxiously into the room.

The information was true. Mr. Dunlap had worked himself into so high a state of excitement, over the prospect of winning Katy from his more favored rival, that he had burst a bloodvessel.

Dr. Thurstone looked grave the instant he saw him. "It would be cruel to deceive you," he said, after a minute's hesitation. "You will not live an hour."

Such a cry of grief and horror as went up from the bed! It rang in Katy's ears for many a long day afterward.

At last Mr. Dunlap became calmer, and motioned her to approach.

"I may as well make a clean breast of it," he said, gloomily. "I can't die till I have told you the truth."

"Speak out!" cried Katy, excitedly.

"I will. It was *not* Robert Graham who assaulted me in the Crofton woods."

"Who was it?" she asked, breathlessly.

"I don't know. Three desperadoes who thought I had money, and wished to rob me. I think they were strangers."

That was all he had to tell. But it was quite enough to make Katy the happiest creature in all the world.

Oscar Dunlap died. Nobody wept at his funeral save Martha Clark; and they were tears of rage and disappointment which she let fall.

The old resentment against Dr. Thurstone burned more fiercely than ever in her heart. But he did not care for that. He had found his child, and he was well content.

Of course Robert Graham married Katy. She was ready enough now to confess that she had loved him from the first, and her affections had never wandered.

"I have had a terrible lesson, Rob," she said to him on their wedding morn. "Now that I am really rich, I shall know how to make good use of my wealth. Henceforth, I have no ambition for myself. It is all centred in you, my husband. I am content to be anything or nothing with you."

For answer, he stooped and kissed her.

## LADY MAUD'S PICTURE.

BY JANE G. AUSTIN.

It was a strange picture. I dreaded to meet its eyes, and yet could never help, when I was at my grandmother's, stealing up to her chamber to see it; and many is the time I have sat and looked till the tears ran down like rain, and my heart seemed fit to break.

It was the full-length picture of a lady, young, and very beautiful, and had a grand look about it, as though she were one who had always been rich and looked up to, and kept from all harm, and everything hard and coarse. Not happy, either. Oh, no! I think that was why it made me cry so, there was such a heart-break in the great dark eyes; and, as she sat there, with her head leaning on her hand (what a beautiful hand it was!), and a mocking smile just curling her proud lips, it seemed as if she were trying not to think of what she thought of most.

I had asked my grandmother once who the beautiful lady was for whom the picture was painted; but she only said, with a kind of quiver all over her face, —

"Her name was Lady Maud Mowbray; and that is all I have to say of her to you."

My grandmother was a stern woman, and, although I loved her dearly, I never dared again to ask the story of Lady Maude; only whenever my father would let me make a visit to Beechside (that was the village where grandmamma lived), I would go softly up, as soon as I could get away alone, and look and look till it seemed as if Lady Maud's sorrows and sins had become all my own, and lay heavy at my heart.

Perhaps it was as well for me that there came a long break in these visits to Beechside, and other things came to put the picture quite out of my mind. My father's second wife died when I was fifteen, and after that I had no time for visiting or dreaming; for there were two little children (one of them a baby) looking to me to fill their mother's place. (She was a kind and loving mother to them.) And my father seemed to turn more to me for comfort and affection than he had ever done before, and would look at me, and sigh, and call me

Alice; but I was generally called Mary, — for both names belonged to me, and my stepmother did not like the name of Alice.

Five long years passed away, and then Susan was fifteen, and little Johnny was a nice, stout boy, going to school; and I thought I might at last say yes to poor Robert, who had been waiting for me these four long years. Dear father gave a glad consent, and said words, as he parted with me on my marriage-day, that even now make me thrill all over with love and pride when I remember them. So I left them, and Susan, who was always a steady, thoughtful girl, made a nice little housekeeper; and when she married, last spring, her husband came to live with my dear father, who says he loves him quite as well as if he had been born his son.

The day before we were married Robert told me that Sir Harry (Robert is gamekeeper to Sir Harry Percival, and we have a beautiful little cottage in the park) had given him leave of absence for a fortnight; and he asked me where I would like to go. I had received a letter that very morning from my grandmother, telling me how happy she was at hearing that I was about to marry so well, and saying that if we made a wedding jaunt we must come, first of all, to see my mother's mother.

I showed the letter to Robert, and he said at once that we would go directly there; for he would rather see one who loved me so well than all the fine sights in London, — where he had at first thought of taking me. It was very kind of him to say this, and I could not but love him better than ever; although Aunt Betsy said that I loved him more than was right already.

So we went to Beechside, and had a very, very happy visit. We arrived there in the morning, and I did not think of Lady Maud all day until just at sunset, as I sat quite alone in the little parlor watching the beautiful clouds. Then all at once I thought of the picture, and it seemed as if it were calling me to come to it, and I had no power to resist. So I stole quietly up-stairs into my grandmother's room, and carefully shut

the door before I turned to look at Lady Maud.

I had half expected to find that the spell which had bound my childhood to that picture was broken, and that it would seem to me only a common portrait of a handsome lady; but, oh, no! As I slowly raised my eyes to that glowing face, now lighted up by the last rays of the setting sun, a cold shiver ran over my whole frame, and I buried my face in my hands. Then I looked again, and the old feeling came over me, binding my heart to hers, and making me feel as if the sorrow of her life had entered into mine. I could not tell why, but, as I looked, I sank upon my knees, and prayed to God that he would help me to be a good and faithful wife; and I said "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," as I never had said it before.

As I wept and prayed in this manner, a gentle hand smoothed down my hair, and, starting up, I saw that it was my grandmother.

"I thought that I should find you here, Alice," she said. "I have noticed, more, perhaps, than you suspected, your visits to this picture; and, now that you are married, and old enough to hear of such things, I will tell you the story of it. Perhaps it may be useful to you; though, thank God! we humble folks do not have the temptations and trials of such as she,—my poor, sweet lamb!"

That evening, as we all three sat around the blazing fire, grandmother laid down her knitting, took off her spectacles, folded her hands upon her silk apron, and began her story in these words:—

"You have no doubt heard, Alice, that forty years of my life were spent in the family of the Earl of Glenburne. I just went to the castle when I was a girl of sixteen to help my grandmother, who was then housekeeper. The old earl was married soon after I went there, and brought his lady home. She took a great fancy to me, and used to have me about her a great deal; and, at last, when her son and heir was born, I took the office of nurse,—for, although I was so young, the countess was pleased to say she had rather trust her boy to my love than to a stranger's experience. I did love him; and from a baby he was the sweetest, most winning child I ever knew.

"When Lord Delmaine was five years old, little Lady Maud was born; and that

same night the countess died. All was sorrow and mourning at the castle, for she was a sweet, mild lady, and all loved her, from the proud earl down to the meanest servant. A nurse was obtained for the poor, motherless baby; but the earl told me I was to be head nurse, and to have the whole charge of Lord Delmaine.

"The new nurse was a low, vulgar creature, and I determined that before my little lady was old enough to understand her vile talk I would be rid of her. So when Lady Maud was two years old, the earl, at my humble request, discharged her, and I had a young girl from the village to help me in the nursery.

"In this way things went on very happily and peacefully with us. The earl was a good deal away from home, traveling on the continent, and living at a hotel in London; but he trusted everything to grandmother and to me, and I hope we both tried to do our duty, and deserve his confidence.

"At last, when little Lord Delmaine was ten years old, he was sent to school (I had taught him, in my humble way, to read and write), and at the same time a nursery governess was engaged for Lady Maud. Seeing my little lady so well attended (for Esther, the girl whom I had hired, was still to remain), I concluded to marry your grandfather, who had been courting me for two years; but I would not say yes to him while my dead mistress's children seemed to need me.

"So we were married, and for ten years I was a happy wife. Then my husband died, and I found myself alone with my one child. That was your mother, Alice, and a sweet and lovely woman she was. Ah, well, it won't be long ere I shall see her and her father again in the world where there are no partings."

There was a pause, which neither Robert nor I would have broken, and then grandmother spoke again.

"After my husband's death, my grandmother, who was growing old and feeble, spoke to the earl about me, and he sent me a very kind message to come up to the castle, and bring my little girl with me. So we went, and I helped my grandmother for a few months; then she went to live with one of her children, on the pension which the earl gave her, and I became the housekeeper.

"Lady Maud, whom I had left a pretty

child, had now grown up into a beautiful young lady, and her merry laugh and bits of gay songs filled the grim old castle like sunshine. Ah! I can see her now, as I have seen her so many times, when Esther (who was now her lady's-maid, and who worshipped her beautiful mistress) had curled her splendid chestnut hair, and crowned it with wreaths of wild flowers. Then sometimes she would come dancing into my room, and, twirling me round in her arms, say, in her merry, childish way, —

"See, nurse, how pretty I look now."

"Ah, poor darling! if she was too wild and playful then, as I have heard her aunts tell her when they were at the castle, there came a time soon enough when all who loved her would have given a year of life to have heard that gay, careless laugh once more.

"I had been housekeeper at Glenburne Castle about a year, when the earl, returning from one of his journeys, brought with him from Italy a nephew whom he had found there. The earl's youngest sister had, when very young, eloped with an Italian count, whom her parents had forbidden her to see or speak with. He carried her to Italy, and she was as if dead to her family. But her brother, as he grew old, and lost one friend after another, began to think of her with love, and at last inquired her out, and went to see her just in time to forgive her before she died. Her husband, Count Arnaldi, had died some years before, and she and Luigi, her only son, had been living in extreme poverty. To her brother's care she confided her son; and, after laying all that was left of poor Lady Clara in her lonely foreign grave, the earl brought his nephew to his own house.

"The young count was about two years older than Lady Maud, and they were very much together. He used to read to her hours at a time, sometimes in the library, sometimes out under the trees on the lawn. It was generally Italian poetry that he read, so Esther said, for Lady Maud generally had her to sit and sew in the room with them, or to wait upon her when they walked.

"I felt very uneasy at seeing all this familiarity between so beautiful and loving a young lady as my own sweet nursing and a young man like her cousin, so handsome and romantic, and so different from what her father would have approved as a hus-

band for her. But it was very far from my place to interfere, or even to speak to others who might have done so. However, I did venture to hint to Mademoiselle Rochefort, my young lady's French governess, that I did not like the way things were going; but she only laughed at me, and said that as long as monseigneur found no fault we need not disturb ourselves. Nor do I think she would have cared to interfere if she had seen the poor young lady going straight to destruction, if she could secure her salary, and have the most of her time to herself.

"The earl, as I have said, was away most of the time, and Lord Delmaine was still at college: so there seemed to be no one to guide these poor, ignorant children, or to keep them from walking straight into the gulf which lay open before them.

"The young count had a great passion for painting. He had a studio in one corner of the picture-gallery, and there they used to spend hours, — he painting, and she sometimes sitting for a model, sometimes leaning over his shoulder, and watching his progress. Many were the portraits which he painted of her: but none were finished, for the artist never could be satisfied that his picture was beautiful enough; and so he would leave one, and begin another, only to leave that in its turn.

"Matters went on in this way for a while, and then Lord Delmaine came of age, and we had a great celebration at the castle. My lord and the earl both came home, and the earl's two sisters, the Countess of Lansdowne, and Lady Barbara Mowbray, came down from London with a large party of fine ladies and gentlemen; so that my hands and my mind were both full of care and perplexities, and I had very little time to notice even what my dear young lady was doing.

"One day, however, Esther came to my room, with her face all swelled and red with crying, and bid me come up to Lady Maud. I asked in affright what was the matter, and the girl (who, I believe, felt all that grieved her mistress as if it had happened to herself) said that the earl had just been with her young lady, and had told her that a friend of his, who had come down with the rest from London, had fallen in love with her, and proposed for her; and that he was very much pleased with the match, and felt sure that his daughter must be so too, for

Lord St. Clair was one of the richest and most honorable peers of the realm. But he did not add, or seem to think of the fact, that Lord St. Clair was very nearly as old as himself, and a man whom almost everybody feared and hated.

"Esther, who was present at the interview (indeed, the poor, lonely lamb had always treated her more as a sister than a servant), said that Lady Maud sat looking at her father, while he said these cruel words, as if she did not understand, or could not believe him; but, as he turned to leave the room, saying that in the evening he would arrange an interview between her and Lord St. Clair, she sprang forward, and going down on her knees before her father, begged him to give up this cruel, cruel scheme.

"O father! father!" said she, 'do not force me into this dreadful marriage, or my eternal misery will rest upon your head.'

"The earl raised her to her feet, looked searchingly in her face an instant, and said sternly, —

"Maud, such passionate denial of a worthy suit is only to be accounted for by a previous attachment. Has a second daughter of the house of Glenburne' —

"The earl never finished his question, for the poor child, tried too severely, fainted in his arms, and, laying her upon the couch in her boudoir, where he had found her, he told Esther (whom he had not noticed before) to call Mademoiselle Rochefort to take care of her lady. But when my poor child opened her eyes, she turned away from the Frenchwoman, and her first words were to tell Esther to bring nurse (for the darling always called me so, except before strangers).

"Esther told me of this as we were going up-stairs; and I was not surprised, when we entered the boudoir, to find the French governess sitting in the bay-window, with her back to the couch where Lady Maud still lay, and beside which knelt Count Luigi, holding one of her hands in both of his, and speaking in a low, tender voice, which showed but too plainly what was the drift of the talk, although he spoke in Italian.

"I hesitated for a moment; but I saw my duty plain before me, and, even at the risk of offending my young lady, I went up to the young man, and said, —

"I am very sure, Count Arnaldi, that my master would be displeased at having

Lady Maud agitated in this manner, when she is already far from well.'

"My darling uncovered her face, and, partly rising, she looked at me for an instant with an expression of haughty reproach, which brought out her father in her face; but it was only for an instant, and then her own sweet look came back, and she said, —

"Nurse is quite right, Luigi: father and brother would be very angry to see us thus. And, indeed, this room is no place for you: you should not have been let in at all,' she added, turning the same look upon mademoiselle which had for one moment grieved me so much.

"The young count spoke some few words in his native tongue; but my darling shook her head, and the young man was obliged to leave the room.

"Lady Maud next told her governess that she had no further need of her services, and mademoiselle flounced out of the room in an offended way. Then my dear young lady turned over with a groan, and laid her poor aching head in my lap, just as she used when a little child. No, she did not say much: she felt that I was not just the one to whom she could open her poor, troubled heart, and ask for help and comfort. And, indeed, sweet lamb, there was not one heart to which she could open hers in the wide world. Oh, how I wished, as I sat there, that her mother had been spared to her!

"I left her at bed-time, — for she would not have any one sit up with her, although I feared that she was quite ill, — and I thought that if she looked as wild and haggard in the morning as she then did, the earl could not but relent, and break off the match with Lord St. Clair.

"But the Earl of Glenburne did not live to see the morrow. When his servant entered his chamber the next morning to awaken his master, as he had been ordered, he found him stiff and cold in his bed. He had had a trouble in his heart, at times, for many years; and the great doctor whom Lord Ralph, now Earl of Glenburne, had sent for from London, said he died of it in his sleep, without pain or consciousness.

"Of course all thoughts of marriage and merry-making were given up at once, and all visitors left the castle. But before Lord St. Clair went he had a long talk with the young earl, and, as they came out into the hall, I heard Lord Ralph say, —

"In the mean time, I shall be happy to see you, here, or in London."

"With the rest, Count Arnaldi left Glenburne, and I heard that he had begun to paint for a living, in London; for my master had died so suddenly that there was no will, and the poor young man was no richer than when his uncle brought him from Italy.

"For guardians, Lady Maud had her brother, and Lord Lansdowne, her aunt's husband. It was at first determined that she should live with her uncle and aunt; but this my young lady entirely refused to do,—and she had a pretty decided will of her own,—so that Lord Mowbray invited his father's maiden sister, Lady Barbara, to come and stay with them at Glenburne.

"After this, we fell again into our old quiet ways. Lady Maud read or worked in her own rooms, or else she and Esther wandered about the park and shrubberies. Lord Mowbray came and went, much as his father had done; and Lady Barbara, who liked to be thought in ill health, took medicine, and lay in bed. This state of things lasted nearly all the year of mourning. Lady Maud often received letters from London, and wrote as many answers; but how they were directed I do not know, for Esther always went to the village to post them, and I never questioned her.

"The year of mourning at last expired, and the next day Lord Mowbray came from London, and asked Lady Maud to let him see her alone in the library. I feared what it was my lord had to say; and I was not surprised when Esther came to my room, an hour afterward, to call me to her lady's chamber.

"I did not find my pet in the same state of despair that I had seen before; but I would rather have witnessed her tears than the smile with which she turned around to meet me as I entered the room.

"'I sent for you, nurse,' said she, 'because I thought you would like to hear from my own lips that I am to be married next month.'

"She laughed in the same wild way as she had smiled; but the laugh ended in a wild sob, and I believe the tempest of tears which followed saved her reason. I questioned her as tenderly and cautiously as I could, and, her loneliness quite subduing her pride, she talked to me as she would to her own mother.

"Her brother had told her that her father's last act had been to promise her hand to Lord St. Clair, and that he himself had renewed the promise.

"'And then, nurse, he said—oh, I cannot tell you what insulting things he said!—that he would tell Lord St. Clair, and all the world beside, that I loved a beggar, who did not care enough for me to pick up the heart I laid at his feet. He tortured me so with his wicked words till I was wild, and told him I would marry that old man, or worse than him, to escape from such a home, and such a brother.'

"Deary me! I could say nothing to the poor child that would sound like comfort to her. I knew there was no hope that she could marry the man she loved, and indeed I could not bear the thought of Lady Maud Mowbray, of Glenburne, marrying a poor Italian portrait-painter. I knew not what to say, except to bid her pray for help to Him who alone has power to save.

"'Pray!' said she wildly: 'what could I pray for except death? and that will come soon,—yes, soon come,' she said drearly.

"Well, I cannot bear to talk or think of that sad month before the wedding. Lord Glenburne spared no expense or trouble to make it a splendid affair; and I truly believe he thought he was doing the best he could for his sister in forcing this great marriage upon her. He looked upon a connection with Arnaldi as utter ruin to a person of Lady Maud's degree, and I have no doubt he fully believed that in a little while she would thank him for what he did.

"So they were married,—and I hope I may never see another such a bride as I helped to dress that morning. Her beautiful face was as white as her silk dress; and her eyes looked straight forward, without seeing anything. Esther, who cried the whole morning, was to go with them; and, as the carriage left the door, I went up to my lady's empty chamber, and prayed, as I never prayed before, that she whom I loved as my own child might have a happier life than this sad morning promised.

"After the wedding, Lady Barbara went home with Lady Lansdowne, and the earl returned to London, where he spent most of his time, except in the shooting season, when he visited one and another of his numerous friends. At last we had news that he was going to be married; and soon after he came down to the castle himself, and

brought an architect to plan some new rooms, and an upholsterer to take orders for new furniture.

"In the evening he told me himself that he should shortly bring us a new lady, and that he should stay at Glenburne for some months to superintend the improvements. I was very glad to hear the news, for the old castle had seemed very dull since my young lady left us, and I had heard that the bride that was to be was a very sweet and lovely lady; and I pleased myself with thinking of the time when little voices and the patter of little feet should wake the echoes of the old castle once more, and fill its long corridors and solemn rooms with music. But these pleasant dreams were to have a fearful interruption.

"It was a wild, fearful night in the last of November when Lady Maud St. Clair returned to her father's house. A storm had been coming on for several days; and just at sunrise it broke upon us. The night had shut in, and, with closed blinds, and blazing fire and candles, I was hoping that none for whom I cared were out in such a night. Just then I heard a loud peal at the bell, followed by a furious knock. The footman hastened to open the door, and I heard a man inquire, —

"'Is Lord Glenburne' —

"But he was interrupted by another and familiar voice, asking, in a tone which apparently tried to be calm, but could not, —

"'Is your master at home, John?'

"'Yes, my Lord St. Clair,' answered John: 'the earl is in the library.'

"'Show me thither immediately,' said the visitor, in a low tone.

"John opened the library door, and as soon as Lord St. Clair had entered it closed again.

"I returned to my own room; but my heart beat so thick, and I felt so agitated, I could not rest, and went wandering up and down the room, waiting to hear more. Nor did I wait long, for in a few minutes the hall door opened, and the two gentlemen went out; then my young master called out, in a thick, hoarse voice, —

"'Where's Benson? call Mrs. Benson!'

"I did not wait to be called, but ran out at once into the hall; and there I saw the earl holding my poor, sweet lamb in his arms, and she in a dead faint. Behind her stood Esther crying and sobbing hysterically. My lord's face was as pale as death,

and his breath came hard through his set teeth.

"'Take this—take Lady Maud to the chamber that was formerly her's, Benson,' said he, in that same hoarse voice, 'and attend to her.'

"But when I put my arm about her, and tried to hold her up, she hung like a dead person; and I then saw that she was in a way which should have made any man more tender of her.

"Lord St. Clair, who had stood till now outside the door, seeing that I could not hold her, came forward, and said, —

"'I will take her up-stairs.'

"The words were few, but the voice was so full of agony that I could not but pity him, although I laid my poor child's unhappiness at his door. So he carried her up-stairs, and laid her on her own pretty bed, which I had always kept aired, and in order, thinking that my darling would come home some time unexpectedly; but not in this way, — oh, no! not so.

"Her husband laid her down, and was turning away; but before he reached the door he hesitated, turned back, and coming up to the bedside he stooped over, and gazed at the beautiful, still face with a wild, earnest look, so full of love and anger and sorrow that the bitter tears rolled down my cheek, and I cried for him as well as for her. At last my lord stooped down, and kissed her pale, cold forehead with a long, loving kiss, and then turned away; and, as he turned, I saw that all the love and sorrow left his face, and stern and haughty anger alone remained.

"He went directly to the library, and he and my young master were shut up together for about half an hour, while Esther and I were trying by every means to bring our darling mistress out of that terrible swoon. At last I began to fear that she was dead, and I ran down to the library to ask her brother to send for a physician. As I turned the handle, the library door was pulled hurriedly open from inside, and I heard Lord St. Clair say, in a voice of the bitterest anger, —

"'Yes, my lord: for all this misery and sin, I think you may fairly claim the greatest share of blame for your silence in regard to this first love.'

"As he spoke, he opened the door, and, pushing by me, rushed out into the storm. For a moment the clatter of his horses' feet

rose above the din of wind and rain, and then he was gone. I stood still an instant, to get my breath, and then pushed open the door. My poor young master sat by the table, with his head leaned on his folded arms, and, as I softly entered, he groaned aloud,—

“‘God forgive me and her!’

“I spoke his name; but he did not hear till I touched his arm. Then he looked up, and anywhere else I would not have believed it to be the face I had known from babyhood. When I could speak, I told him that we could not arouse Lady Maud, and I feared that she would never wake from that dreadful swoon.

“‘So much the better!’ groaned he, laying his face again upon his arms. ‘What is left for any of us but to die?’

“‘My lord! my lord!’ said I, ‘you do not know what words you are saying: shall I send for Dr. Morton?’

“‘Anything, anything,—only leave me alone,’ answered my master, with an impatient wave of the hand.

“I sent a man for the doctor with all speed, and then I hastened up-stairs to my darling’s chamber. I found that, by Esther’s care, she was beginning to recover. As I bent over her, she opened her great eyes, and looked in my face for a moment with her sweet smile. Then, as she began to remember, she turned away, and, putting her hands over her face, cried and sobbed so that I was more frightened than while she lay so cold and still.

“‘Dear child,’ whispered I, ‘try to be calm for the sake of your unborn baby.’

“But at this, which I thought would soothe her, she gave a convulsive cry, and her sobs and tears redoubled; so that when the doctor came, an hour afterward, her state seemed hopeless. Her agitation had the effect I feared, and just twenty-four hours after Lady Maud re-entered her home she gave birth to a boy. The little darling never breathed on earth; but I believe that his angel lives in Heaven, pure and unspotted by his parents’ sin.

“The doctor left us an hour or two after all was over, saying that my lady was doing very well, and that he should be in again early in the morning.

“It was a fearful night: the wind howled and shrieked around the deserted turrets and through the lonesome galleries of the old castle, where my lady had chosen to

have her apartments. The rain would dash against the windows with a wild fury, as if a malicious spirit had gathered the waters in his hand, and, with a shrieking, fiendish laugh, was battering at the casement. I could not but think of the many foolish stories I had heard of the ghost of old Lord Ralph, who murdered his wife in this very turret of the castle a hundred years ago, and who was said to haunt the place whenever one of the house of Glenburne was to die.

“I went to draw the curtains closer over the straining casement, and when I returned I found my dear young mistress awake, and quite calm.

“‘Nurse,’ said she, in a faint, weak voice, ‘there is a picture that was brought here with me. Will you bring it here?’

“I went into the dressing-room, where the baggage which my lady had brought with her was placed, and lying on the trunks was the very picture which now hangs in my chamber. I carried it to the bedside, and held it so that my darling could see it. She looked a long time at it, lying very still and calm; then she said, in her sweet, faint voice,—

“‘I am happier now than when that was painted, for I am going to die. Oh that I had been dead then!’ added she, in a more agitated voice.

“She was still for a moment, and then spoke again.

“‘I give that picture to you, dear nurse, for I believe you are the only one in all the world who has truly loved me since I was born; and I want you to hang this picture in your own chamber, and every night and morning to pray the Lord to have mercy on my soul.’

“I could not speak, for tears; and, after resting for a few minutes,—for, alas! the poor, sweet voice was growing very weak,—my darling took from a ribbon on her neck a miniature set in gold, and, giving it to me with the face down, she said,—

“‘Take this, nurse, and bury it in the glowing fire. Oh that I could lay my heart there, and purge it of its sins!’ whispered she to herself, as I took the miniature.

“She had not shown me the face, and I would not look at it; but in the back was a thick curl of black hair. I laid it in the hottest part of the fire, and heaped the coals upon it.

“I came back to her bedside, and found



her crying softly. I tried to comfort her; but she only said,—

“Let me cry, dear nurse. I would cry my life out if I could wash away the past.”

“I could not stop her; and from crying softly she began to sob convulsively, and at last became so agitated that I again sent for the doctor. But he was away, no one knew where; and when he came in the morning the poor child was quiet enough. Cold and still and pale she lay, and her own sweet, innocent look had come back to her.

“No hands but mine put on that last white robe; and, as I clasped her cold fingers across her breast, I prayed—as truly as her own mother could have prayed—that the poor, untaught, unsupported young soul might be washed clean in those tears with which she had indeed wept her life away.”

My grandmother paused again, and I cried softly on my husband's breast. In a few minutes she resumed.

“I had not seen my young master since I went to him in the library, for I had asked the doctor to tell him of his sister's death; but as I sat watching alone in that still, cold chamber, the next night, the door softly opened, and Lord Glenburne entered. He did not speak or look at me; and I rose, and left the room, closing the door upon them.

“Long hours passed while I sat crouching on the stairs, and as the first gray of morning began to show things in its fearsome light my young master left his sister's chamber as softly as he had entered. Even in that dim light I shivered to see the work which those three sad days had done upon the earl's handsome face. He looked older than many a man of twice his years. He did not speak, but went back to the library, and I did not see him again for days.

“They laid her in the family tomb, and her baby with her; but on the silver plate was only the one word, ‘Maud.’

“When we could bear to talk of her, Esther told me a great deal of what had passed previous to that dreadful night.

“When Lord St. Clair took his bride home, it seemed as if he could not satisfy himself with showing his great love for her. He did not seem to mind that his fond words made her shudder, and that she turned wearily away from his rare and costly gifts.

“At last the doting husband said he must

have a picture of his idol to look at when he could not see her; for my lady, on one pretext and another, kept her own room a great part of the time. Esther said that when my lord proposed this, her mistress only shuddered, and bent over the embroidery in her lap.

“As soon as he could bring himself to leave home, Lord St. Clair went up to town, and in a few days returned with an artist who had been recommended to him as the first in London. He asked Lady Maud's permission to bring the artist to her boudoir, and she consented, in the haughty, indifferent way in which she generally spoke to him; but when he again entered the room, followed by Count Luigi Arnaldi, she gave a start and a cry which made her husband stop half way in his introduction. Lady Maud soon recovered herself, and said, in her calm, cold way,—

“‘I supposed you were aware, my lord, that Count Arnaldi was my cousin-german, and that for several years he was an inmate of my father's house.’

“Lord St. Clair seemed very much astonished, but all the more pleased with his new friend; and he begged him to stay and make them a long visit.

“Count Luigi staid, and the first sitting was put off from day to day until Lord St. Clair became quite impatient.

“At last the picture was begun; but, although the sittings were long and frequent, there did not seem to be much progress. The husband was always present when he could be; but he had so much to attend to, with his large property, that very often he was obliged to leave the studio to see his steward, or one of his tenants, or to receive a visit from one of his brother magistrates.

“At last a letter came, saying that his brother was dying, and wished to see him immediately. Lord St. Clair went, after many regrets and fond farewells to his cold and silent wife. The picture was now soon finished, and the cousins spent their time in reading their poems, and rambling through the park.

“Lord St. Clair was detained, very unwillingly, at his brother's, who lingered for weeks after his arrival; and then, the estate being very much involved, and the widow and children quite helpless, he was obliged to stay till affairs were somewhat settled: so it was nearly two months before he came back. He did not write to say that he was

coming, and when he arrived, his wife and her cousin were in the studio. The eager husband ran directly up-stairs, pushing aside Esther, who wished to announce him.

"What passed between those three is known to none but God. Half an hour afterward, Luigi Arnaldi rode furiously down the avenue, and Lord St. Clair, coming to the dressing-room, where Esther sat, trembling, ordered her to pack up her mistress's clothes, and her own, and be ready, in an hour, to go on a journey.

"Esther did not see her mistress until the carriage was at the door, and then Lady Maud looked as cold and calm as a statue. When the carriage was announced, she walked quietly down-stairs, and entered it. Before the door was closed, Lord St. Clair came down-stairs, bringing with his own hands the unhappy picture, the cause of all this misery. He placed it in the carriage without a word, but with a look in his wife's face more reproachful than words could have been. Then he mounted his horse, and, only saying to the coachman, 'Glen-

burne Castle,' galloped madly forward. And all that long and weary ride, Lady Maud spoke not one word, but sat like one stunned; and Esther never knew when she fell into that deadly swoon in which her brother found her when he came to the carriage door.

"I remained at home with my poor young master, and still and gloomy enough we were for more than a year; but then the earl brought home his long-promised bride,—and a good and kind mistress she was to me for more than thirty years. But then I found myself past doing my duty, as I wished to do it, and so I gave up my place, and came here to live, on the pension my lord allows me."

I never saw the picture after that visit; for my dear grandmother died soon after, and among her few papers they found a note, directing that the picture in her bed-chamber should be sent, with her respects, to the Earl of Glenburne, of Glenburne Castle.

## LADY MEREDITH'S COMPANIONS.

BY MRS. MARIA LYDIA WINDSOR.

## CHAPTER I.

Lady Mary Meredith's—not Lady Juliana's—husband was only plain Mr. William Meredith until he was knighted; I am not sure for what. I believe he made a large fortune in railways and steamboats and factories—and he got knighted on that account, I suppose. But Lady Juliana's husband, who was Sir William's first cousin, was a baronet; and on this account, as well as because her great-grandmother was an earl's third countess, or her step-sister was once engaged to a viscount, or because George the Fourth danced with her mother at a ball in Bath, and was reported to have said that she ought to be a princess—I cannot tell which of the three, but Lady Juliana was unceasingly alluding to them, and, in virtue therefore of her noble blood and her noble connections and belongings, she quite looked down, or pretended to do so, on Lady Mary. A very nasty woman I always considered Lady Juliana; but she was aristocratic and imposing in appearance, and

could be very lady-like and polite when she considered it worth her while.

I lived with Aunt Jane before I was married, near Cheshunt, Lady Meredith's beautiful place, which Sir William had bought a few years before he died. I was very fond of Lady Mary. She was such an old dear, with her funny, short, frizzled gray curls and the big crimson roses in her beautiful white satin-trimmed caps. She would not wear a widow's cap for a longer space than twelve months, she hated them so, deeply as she mourned her good, kind Sir William—which no one that knew her doubted for a moment, although Lady Juliana did say such things about Lady Mary, not only forgetting what was due to her husband's memory, but to her own age, in wearing Parisian head-dresses, and Lady Mary retorted. She was a terrible old lady when she was wronged or offended, though so gentle and easy-going and affectionate. At other times no one could help liking her. Why, it was Lady Mary who made the ma

—I mean brought about the acquaintance between dear Ralph and myself! He was just settled in his Leighmouth practice then, and Lady Meredith used to ask him over to Cheshunt on an average about four times a week. Of course sometimes he could only come once in a fortnight, but, whenever he did come, Lady Mary was sure to cajole me over too, to help her with her wool-work. I believe that was the standing excuse; and then she managed to send Ralph and me into the conservatory or the garden, to do something or other to the flowers or the hot-beds, which somehow never seemed to get done; and then—dear me!—by the time I had finished “grounding” the last of the half-dozen of chair-seats in Lady Mary’s exquisitely brilliant Berlin wool-work, I had promised to become Mrs. Ralph Seymour, and the half-dozen chair-seatings and a lovely silver coffee and tea service came to me as a wedding present from Lady Meredith’s kind hands. Miss Nellie Fraser, Lady Mary’s companion, was my bridesmaid. That was the girl I was going to be so jealous of, because Ralph admired her yellow hair, and low, broad, statuesque brow, and white, blue-veined temples, so much; and Lady Meredith gave me such a scolding, I remember, for even hinting that “the innocent child,” as she called her, “ever had an idea about such things in her poor little head.”

She was not Lady Meredith’s companion at that time, but had been staying with her grandfather, old Doctor Fraser, for change of air; and Lady Meredith, her motherly heart overflowing with sympathy and tenderness for the fragile, consumptive-looking girl, had carried her off bodily to Cheshunt, and installed her in a delightful little cream-and-rose-color chintz-furnished bedroom next her own, where she nursed and fussed over her to her heart’s content, and led poor Nellie an awful life, between bark and quinine, port-wine, beef-tea, warm salt-baths, and new flannel.

And I was actually silly enough to think of being jealous of the poor, pale-faced little girl because Ralph had talked to her and admired her! I did not get jealous, after all, you know, for the very next day, when Ralph and I were tying up some of Lady Meredith’s favorite carnations, he told me he loved me, and asked me to be his wife; and I broke off handfuls of the finest double pinks in my agitation, and strewed them

over the walk in a shocking manner, though, when I made confession of my absurdity to him afterwards, penitently repeating also Lady Meredith’s reproof, Ralph only looked up at the clouds and smiled quizzically.

“One would think she was seven years old,” he said, satirically. “Miss Eleanora Fraser is eighteen, and quite as clever and womanly as those auburn-haired, gray-eyed girls always are.”

She did look an innocent child, nevertheless, in her sweet, maidenly simplicity, so different from that absurd, simpering Miss Hill, or that bold, black-haired Charlotte Selden, whom I think Lady Meredith disliked more than she did any one in her life, except Lady Juliana. The intensity of the nature of the quiet feud between them and poor old Lady Mary’s furious ire against Lady Juliana’s haughty airs and fashionable impertinence were something amazing; but, in Miss Selden’s case, there was a great deal of wounded feeling in Lady Meredith’s heart at the ungrateful return which the girl had made her who was not only kind—Lady Mary could never be anything else to her worst foe—but a generous, affectionate, and considerate friend. And then, after all, her behaviour in that Montessor affair! As Lady Meredith used to say to me, with a solemn shake of the white satin ribbons and big crimson roses:

“My dear, there will be retributive justice for Charlotte Selden’s double treachery!”

It was just that—double treachery, selfish, wicked deceit, and underhand scheming and plotting. And the number of lies she told! But what can you expect from a woman with great coarse, black hair, broad, coarse eyebrows, a high color, bright, staring, black eyes, a loud voice, and five feet nine of solid stature? “Nothing,” I say; but Ralph says, “Nonsense! They are as nice women as can be—sometimes.”

Well, Lady Meredith took this person—she was not a lady any more than I am Lalla Rookh—down into Wiltshire with her when she went to spend Christmas at Hewell Court—that magnificent old place belonging to Mr. Broughton, the member for some queer place in Durham or Cornwall—and, as Lady Meredith always did, she introduced Miss Selden, her companion, to all her friends and acquaintances as an equal and an honored guest, and expected them to treat her accordingly.

I believe she had quite a little plot of—

well, I suppose I must call it match-making, though I dislike the word so much, for the benefit of her dear Miss Selden sketched out beforehand, and made her a present, notwithstanding her handsome salary, of the most beautiful black velvet costume I have ever seen, trimmed lavishly with lovely satiny silver-colored grebe. But Miss Charlotte Selden had no notion of depending on Lady Meredith's present for a handsome dress, and she fairly astounded her and every one else by the variety and richness of her costumes.

"I always delighted in seeing her well dressed and attractive-looking, my dear, you know," Lady Meredith said, deprecatingly; "but really, when she used to come sailing into the drawing-room in such a peculiar way, with her head up and her train of violet silk flowing yards behind her, and her corsage so dreadfully low"—and the dear old lady's hands used to touch mechanically the band of her silk apron—"and her hair frizzed up and curled down and puffed out until it was the size of my ebony cabinet there, I used to feel quite uncomfortable, and the ladies used to talk quite bitterly to me, as if I could help it."

She dressed in white llama and swansdown in the morning, and played billiards with Harry Montessor; in furs and velvet in the afternoon, when she went skating on the great lake in the park with Captain Wriothsley of the Coldstream Guards, or Harry Montessor; and in mauve silk or white grenadine, with pearls in her hair, in the evening, when she sang duets and played chess with Mr. Broughton or Harry Montessor. The young woman thought nothing at all of rose-colored satin, eider-down skirts, ostrich-plumed hats, French bonnets of ruby velvet, and thirty-shilling boots with heels three inches high, tipped with brass which clinked like the spurs of a cavalry major.

No wonder the ladies frowned, and the dowager Mrs. Montessor said indignantly that she should like to know what salary Lady Meredith paid that companion of hers. She was young Harry Montessor's mother, and was staying at Hewell Court at the time, and her niece also, Harry's cousin and fiancée, an amiable, pretty girl, devotedly attached to him, and an heiress to boot, whose ample fortune Mrs. Montessor fondly hoped would clear off every remaining debt or mortgage on her son's Cumberland es-

tate. Unfortunately the dowager's insulting remarks about Miss Selden were overheard by that young lady, and, I dare say, helped to determine her in her scheme of reprisal, for Mrs. Montessor had scarcely awakened to a consciousness of what was going on, and taken her delinquent son to task, had a serious talk with her niece, and begun to make speedy preparations for the final achievement of her cherished desire, in the union of their hearts, hands, and fortunes—I believe she had arranged the name and number of the bridesmaids—when, to her rage, mortification, and dismay, she proved the truth of Robert Burns's assertion that

"The best-laid schemes o' mice and men  
Gang aft agley,"

when one morning, as she was leisurely enjoying her late breakfast in her dressing-room, a perfumed rose-colored note was handed to her, inscribed in Charlotte Selden's dashing black caligraphy; and I leave you to imagine the unfortunate dowager's feelings when the flippantly written epistle informed her that the writer had at length yielded to "dear Harry's solicitations," and, having been married to him by special license an hour before, was then on her way to the Isle of Wight for a short honeymoon, and that, although Mrs. Montessor had not treated her very kindly or very courteously, she intended on her return "to forget and forgive," and remained her "dutiful daughter-in-law, Charlotte Montessor."

Nobody ever has much sympathy for the disappointment of a match-making mother, and Mrs. Montessor was not made an exception; but every one pitied and sympathized with the poor young girl, Harry Montessor's gentle, affectionate cousin, whom he had so slighted and insulted. Mrs. Montessor was frantic; Mr. and Mrs. Broughton were extremely displeased and offended; and between them all poor Lady Meredith got such severe blame for her companion's conduct that she left Hewell Court in high dudgeon next day, and never visited there again.

"How was I to know she was plotting to inveigle Harry Montessor at the very time that I fancied that nice young Gilbert, the curate, was just going to propose to her, and I had made up my mind to give her that beautiful gray-and-violet carpet which I had bought for the small drawing-room, and my majolica vase with the twisted-pat-

tern rings?" said poor Lady Meredith. "How was I to know that she was dreadfully in debt for all those fine clothes? She told me her uncle used to send her money. And, as for her early walks in the park, she said she could never breakfast without a good walk first; and I never dreamt but that she went out for a nice 'constitutional,' Lizzie, until I smelt cigar-smoke so strong about her veil and jacket one day."

And then, as a frightful warning and example, Lady Meredith related the whole history of Mrs. Charlotte Montessor, nee Selden, in minute detail to her next companion, a young lady with a round face, full, red lips, and half-shut eyes—Miss Sophia Hill—who actually appeared neither shocked nor alarmed—who giggled surreptitiously, in fact, several times during the terrible recital—and immediately afterwards evinced a decided tendency to imitate Miss Selden's brilliant achievement at the earliest opportunity, and, having cultivated a clandestine acquaintance with a fascinating, perfumed, and mustached gentleman staying in the neighborhood for a few weeks' grouse-shooting, who used to talk to her through a hole in a quickset hedge, and flung a *billet-doux* up to her window one night and broke a pane of glass, ran out one morning at six o'clock, leaving the hall-door wide open, rushed off to the county town with the fascinating gentleman, married him in a desperate hurry, and then fled back in a state of triumphant agitation and her best green silk dress, to tell Lady Meredith that she had just been espoused by Mr. Harcourt Moore, heir-presumptive to fifteen thousand a year and a baronetcy! Alas! the perfumed and mustached bridegroom was not Mr. Harcourt Moore, but that gentleman's "gentleman," who copied his master very closely in the matter of coats and shirt-studs, bear's grease and waxed and spiked "imperial!" One of the smartest and nattiest of valets, and the son of an honest butcher in Bethnal Green, he had wedded Miss Sophia Hill in his proper name—which, if not quite so euphonious as his borrowed one, at least had the advantage of being his own—Mogley—Thomas Mogley; she had therefore no chance of escape on the score of illegality—so, after a few fits of hysterics, and an alarming effort to tear out Mr. Thomas Mogley's eyes, his deluded bride succumbed to her fate with more good sense than she had ever exhibited on any

previous occasion, and accompanying her lord to his native regions in Cocksaigne, she took to letting lodgings in a comfortable house near the Strand, and, I hear, gained immense credit from her gentlemen boarders for the superior excellence of her mut-ton-chops and kidney-puddings, Thomas Mogley, senior, supplying his son's house with the best joints under market price.

Lady Meredith, after this second catastrophe in the annals of her companions, remained in a state of partial coma, as Ralph's books say, when they mean half out of one's senses, or stupefied, or something like that, for a period of some six weeks.

"Really, people will begin to think that I have something to do with those dreadful creatures who used to live in Fleet Street and marry people with curtain rings and by making them jump over brooms and things of that kind!" cried the poor old lady, wiping her eyes. "And that horrid, prying woman, Lady Juliana, is going about telling everybody, and saying I ought to keep a chaplain at hand, and not give my companions the trouble of running away at day-break to get married!"

"Try a married woman or an engaged young lady next time, Lady Meredith," I suggested, looking up from the bead-work of a gorgeous watch-pocket with "Ralph" on it in small Venetian pearls; "they are always more settled and steady;" and I drew myself up, and took a stealthy peep of admiration at the "A E I" on the inside of my turquoise-and-diamond engagement ring.

Following my advice, therefore, with renewed faith and hope, Lady Meredith the very next week secured, for the consideration of eighty pounds per annum, the services of a young lady—aged thirty-eight—a young lady with a hooked nose and compressed lips, long hands, blue spectacles, and aristocratic relatives.

"A most superior creature, my dear!" whispered Lady Meredith, with an air of elation. "Her manners have quite an elevated tone!"

So they had—such an elevated tone indeed that they could never descend to the level of ordinary existence.

"I have associated with few, but they were of noble name and birth," she said, languidly, toying with her gold vinaigrette, after making some searching inquiries as to

Lady Meredith's antecedents and Sir William's knighthood.

"It is my belief," said Ralph, *sotto voce*, to me in the cushioned bay-window, "that her grandfather was a costermonger, or she would not talk such rubbish!"

This, of course, was but a vile slander on Ralph's part; still we did discover afterwards that Miss Henrietta De Courcy's "papa," although his ancestors "came over with the Conqueror," as his daughter told us, had done very well as a soap-boiler for several years, until he became bankrupt and went to America.

It was also an indivisible accompaniment of the elevated tone of Miss De Courcy's manners that she should exhibit a profound indifference to and distaste for her surroundings, from Lady Meredith's favorite dish of boiled leg of mutton, as she "so much preferred venison, if the haunch was not too fat," to the color of the drab carriage linings—"Lady Maude Carlyon, who had such exquisite taste, always had purple-blue or pale chocolate."

Nor could she, upon any occasion whatsoever, walk out unattended by a footman, which, as Lady Meredith kept but one, was rather awkward at times. She was overwhelmed with astonishment to find that the bookshelves of neither the drawing-room nor the library contained Burke or Debbret's invaluable volumes, and that Lady Meredith never consulted the Red Book, and seldom troubled her head about *Who's Who?*

"Dear Lady Meredith, do you not find the absolute necessity," said she, raising her eyebrows, "of having those books at hand to consult when strangers introduce themselves, for instance, or are introduced to you, to feel quite certain that they are people whom you may know?"

"I don't care one pin who they are, Miss De Courcy, if they are nice people!" returned Lady Meredith, brusquely. She was beginning to get impatient with her aristocratic companion's elevated tone and Norman blood.

She grew more impatient when Miss De Courcy constituted herself censor on the birth, breeding, appearance, and behaviour of her oldest and dearest friends, inquiring plaintively if Lady Meredith knew that Mrs. So-and-so was only an attorney's daughter, and mentioning her extreme disappointment that "those L'Estranges" were not the

people she knew, and that she had fancied they were the nieces of the Honorable Marcus L'Estrange—"such sweet girls—and so perfectly well-bred!"

Ralph and I were so much beneath the notice of "the Norman," as he christened her, that she ignored us altogether, except to reply in cold terms of disapproval when Lady Meredith asked her—fluttering her ribbons and rubbing her hands cheerily, poor old dear!—what she thought of our engagement.

"Absurdly young, and unsuitably matched," she said, scanning us from top to toe, while Ralph and I, standing on the hearth-rug, were discussing the merits and demerits of Claronville and Albion Lodge for our future home in Leighmouth, and deciding on the former because it had the largest drawing-room and was the most sheltered from the sea-breeze. But the negative character of Miss De Courcy's disapproval changed to positive only one week later.

She had been prying about and watching us—old thing! Ralph had taken leave of Lady Meredith, and had just mounted his horse, when I ran down the steps to say a last good-by to him. Ralph, stooping down from the saddle—why, I might not see the poor dear boy for another fortnight!—swung me up with one arm from the ground and kissed me; and then espying Miss De Courcy at the window, he smiled maliciously, and kissed his hand twice over to her.

She shut the window down with a bang, and, going to Lady Meredith, she said, in a kind of cold fury, that, if "that Doctor Seymour has no sense of propriety, Lady Meredith's friend"—with an awful stress—"Miss Lizzie Houghton, should at least exhibit some lady-like decorum."

Lady Meredith heard the case through on both sides, and then she sniffed and put on her gold spectacles.

"Dear me, Miss De Courcy," said she, coolly, "you were young yourself once—don't make such a fuss about a trifle!"

I never imagined Lady Meredith could ever say anything so frightfully cutting.

Miss De Courcy left the room in dead silence, shut herself up in her own apartment for two days, and at the end of that time informed Lady Meredith that a De Courcy never forgave an insult.

"Dear me, what a terrible person you must be!" said she, quietly turning over her work. "I think Lady Juliana Meredith

would suit you excellently, Miss De Courcy. I shall not care to have you near me any longer."

"I wish with all my heart, madam," returned Miss De Courcy, growing greenish-white, "that I had taken Lady Juliana's advice when she told me that both your household arrangements and the tone of your society were such as I had been unaccustomed to, and that—"

"Don't you quote Lady Juliana's insolence to me in my own house!" cried Lady Meredith, fiercely—so fiercely that Miss De Courcy was inclined to believe discretion to be the better part of valor, and was silent for a minute. Then she drew her flowing dress around her in stately fashion and moved towards the door.

"Nevertheless, madam," said she, unable to withhold one Parthian dart, "I prefer to consider the granddaughter of the Countess of Dunraven a higher authority in such matters than a commoner's wife, even if he was knighted. And I intend also that Lady Juliana—"

"I declare, if you mention that woman's name again in my presence," remarked the old lady, quite beside herself, "I'll throw my work-basket at your head!" And she caught hold of it, needles, balls of wool, scissors and all, with such deadly purpose that Miss De Courcy, without an instant's delay, precipitately disappeared.

It was not to be expected that a De Courcy could forgive the threat of a work-basket being thrown at her head; so, after a dignified exchange of frigid notes with Lady Meredith on the subject of salary, Miss De Courcy departed on the following day in company with a modicum of luggage—just five large trunks, three small ones, and a variety of rugs and cases. But, as Ralph said, "she 'came over with the Conqueror,' you know."

## CHAPTER II.

After the departure of "the Norman" there was an interregnum of companions for a long time, until Nellie Fraser—who was now "quite well," according to her own account—"just beginning to live," according to Lady Meredith's—begged that her kind old friend would permit her to fill the situation until Lady Meredith could "get some one better." So Nellie was installed again in the little cream-and-rose-color dainty bedroom, and commenced ful-

filling the onerous duties of brushing Lady Mary's silvery gray hair night and morning, "doing up" the famous white satin and rose-colored caps, reading a psalm and a chapter of Thomas a Kempis before breakfast, and, after supper, making the strong orange-flavored Pekoe tea Lady Mary was so fond of, matching her Berlin-wool shades, and, for the rest, taking care that she herself ate heartily, slept soundly, wore goloshes when walking through the meadows, drank stout at her luncheon, and enjoyed herself to the utmost. Nothing gave greater offence to Lady Meredith than "niminipimini people," as she called them contemptuously, "who went moping about with long faces, instead of being thankful for the mercies of Providence, and looking healthy and happy as they ought to look." Lady Meredith was inclined to use plain language when she was excited, and her companions always got sharply reproved if they confessed to having low spirits or languid appetites. Ralph and I often laughed until we were tired to see poor dear old Lady Mary, as anxious as a hen with one chicken, fussing about after her companion.

"My little Nellie"—she was quite pleased when she invented this appellation—"does not look very bright this morning. I have just made her have some calf's-foot jelly, Doctor Seymour, and sent her to take a turn in the garden. She must have some claret at her luncheon—though she dislikes it so, tiresome child!—or perhaps a little dry sherry. What do you think, Doctor Seymour?"

"Oh, let her have the dry sherry, madam," Ralph would reply, gravely, "or anything she most prefers."

"Ah, yes! But then she won't prefer the things that are good for her," Lady Meredith would say, despondingly. "There, now!"—this exclamation arose from her companion's unexpected return. "Nellie, you have not taken half enough exercise! Tired, are you? Ah, well, then you shall go out for a nice drive with the ponies before dinner, dear!" And the poor childless old lady would stroke down her favorite's yellow hair caressingly.

But, as that winter drew on, thanks to the stout and the dry sherry, the continual petting and the carriage drives, Nellie Fraser, from being a tall, pale, slender girl, just like a fragile white wind-flower, bloomed out—to continue the floral simile—into a



perfect Christmas rose—frail enough, as such dainty blossoms are; but with the color and freshness of life and youth and beauty where one had scarcely hoped to ever find such again. And—as I said repeatedly to Ralph—when she was out driving in Lady Mary's pretty phaeton, amongst the warm white furs and crimson rugs, dressed in her half-fitting braided purple cloth jacket and with her dark golden-brown sealskin cap resting coquettishly on the top of the wavy mass of fair hair, her little driving-gloves grasping the white reins that guided the spirited gray ponies so cleverly, her eyes liquid with excitement, and the deep pink flush from the frosty air tipping her dainty ears and chin and spreading softly on her fair cheek, one could not see for three counties round a purer, sweeter, prettier girl than Nellie Fraser.

Ralph would not agree with me, and said—oh, well, never mind what! Ralph used to say foolish things sometimes, I regret to state!

Poor dear Lady Meredith seemed so delighted with the result of her care and indulgence, and her lonely maternal heart seemed to cling so to the fair, young, motherless girl, that I felt quite miserable to think of her ever being disappointed and left alone again—as I said to Ralph—left to the tender mercies of another bold, black-haired Charlotte Selden, or a frigid, vain, ridiculous old "Norman" creature—until I made Nellie solemnly promise me one day that she would never neglect poor dear old Lady Mary, or be ungrateful to her, or leave her for any one, or anything; and then I felt quite comfortable, though Ralph did laugh and "go on" so disagreeably.

"Poor little Nellie Fraser!"—and then he used to chuckle in a manner that made me throw the nearest book or cushion at him—so as not to hit him, you know. "Solemnly promised to be a companion for ever and ever! She won't be full of envy and malice and all uncharitableness, on the score of 'guinea-gold wedding-rings,' as the shopkeepers call them, after a certain day somewhere in the ensuing sweet spring-time!"

"Ralph!"

"She won't get horribly interested in the price per yard of white *glace*, and think the perfume of orange-blossoms far sweeter than all the other odors of Araby the Blest!"

"I should like to know why?" I interrogated, in a dignified tone.

"Why?" exclaimed Ralph, making all his curly hair stand straight up, and rolling his eyes in a frenzied manner, certainly unbecoming in the steady young Leighmouth physician whom good old ladies took a deep interest in. "Why does the sunflower turn to the sun? Why does the—the—young duck take to the water? Why does the—the beaver—" Here Lady Meredith and Nellie entered the room; and I was glad to see that Ralph had grace enough to look rather ashamed of himself and withdraw as quickly as possible.

"Now, Lizzie, I'll tell you what I have been thinking about," said Lady Meredith, when she was snugly ensconced in her favorite seat, the downiest and puffiest of amber-damask-covered arm-chairs, a quantity of soft, snowy woollen knitting in her lap, and Nellie Fraser tatting beside her.

"As my little Nellie is so much stronger now"—and Nellie got patted on the head with a bunch of knitting-needles—"and you and Ralph Seymour are going to be married in the spring, I think I shall give a few nice Christmas and New-Year's parties this winter. I want you young people all to enjoy yourselves; and Ralph may meet some people whom it will be advantageous for him to know. There is that great geologist, or traveller, or whatever he is—Mr. Hamilton—just come home to his house—don't you know that place where all the owls are, Lizzie—Bramley Grange?—after being three or four years in—in—dear me!—that place that's colored pink in the map of Asia—Afghanistan! Did you ever hear of such a dreadful place to think of living in, dear? So I mean to be kind and neighborly, and ask him over here very often—Bramley Grange is only three miles off, you know—and give the poor man a little cheerful civilized society after those horrid copper-colored people that won't eat beef, and wear no clothes, and put hooks through their backs!" said Lady Meredith, disrespectfully jumbling up Buddha and Brahma. "He is lonely and unmarried, too, poor man," she murmured, parenthetically. "He might"—and she polished her spectacles slowly before she put them on, as if to enable her to descry an auspicious matrimonial future for the Asiatic geologist.

"How old is he?" I asked, eagerly.

"Forty-five, Lizzie, but he looks much

older. His hair is quite gray," said Lady Meredith, regretfully. "I knew poor Gerald Hamilton—as handsome a young lad as ever came from Eton—nearly thirty years ago."

"O-h!" ejaculated I, coldly. I did not see how people could take an interest in bachelors who were not under thirty and who had not curly brown hair and dark-blue eyes.

"Why do you say 'poor Gerald Hamilton,' Lady Meredith?" asked Nellie.

"Because he has had bitter sorrows, my dear," replied Lady Meredith, quickly and gravely—"private family troubles with which no one has any concern, and which happened almost before you were born, my child."

Nellie sat silent, and I did also, for several minutes after this mild rebuke.

"He is a great traveller and very learned?" she murmured, inquiringly, after this pause.

"Yes, dear, very learned and very clever," replied Lady Meredith, with a shade of emphasis.

"Oh, I should like to listen to him and hear him tell of—the world he has seen, and the great oceans and rivers and deserts!" Nellie Fraser said, earnestly, gazing dreamily into the fire.

"So you shall, dear; I am sure you will like it, and it will be most improving to your mind," returned Lady Meredith. "Yes," she pursued, making her knitting-needles flash and click with cheerful purpose, "we will have him here for Christmas, and try to make it a merry and a happy one for him—and you must be kind and attentive to him, Nellie. He is very grave and stern, but you must not be afraid of him, dear"—and Nellie got a pat from the huge ball of wool this time—"it is but his manner—he has as good and noble and true a heart as ever a man had. Poor Gerald Hamilton!"

And Nellie promised faithfully that she would not be afraid of him.

Christmas came and the Christmas parties came, and Mr. Hamilton too—at least he came, for the first time, one evening to dinner. Such a talented, noble-looking man, very tall and strongly made, with a massive, square brow, and deep-set, clear, dark eyes, with a stern gravity in their steadfast gaze, and large, firmly cut features that almost chilled us until we saw the curious gentleness of the melancholy smile that lighted

up those same brilliant eyes and that world-worn face. His hair was quite gray, as Lady Meredith had said, and so was the great, deep, curling beard that he wore, more in accordance with Afghan customs perhaps than ours, flowing over his chest, silver-streaked, long, and abundant enough to rejoice the heart of a Jewish rabbi. I mean to make Ralph cultivate one like it when he grows older!

He had been travelling over the continent of Asia for several years, he told us, partly for pleasure, and partly in the interests of some scientific and geographical societies for research and discovery. He did not dance or seem to care for our charades or any amusements, but sat quietly beside the library fire, talking to two or three elderly ladies and gentlemen, who were listening to him with breathless attention while he related incidents and adventures to them, and "moving accidents by flood and field," and "hair-breadth 'scapes," and told of "antres vast and deserts idle, rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven." I should like to know what on earth put Othello and Desdemona into my head as I looked at Mr. Hamilton, and then at Lady Meredith sitting opposite to him, with Nellie Fraser standing beside her chair, the pupils of her large gray eyes velvety-black with excitement as she listened, appearing with her curious, deeply yellow hair and simple, long white robe as if she had just stepped out of the frame of an old church window.

Dear Lady Meredith was as good and even better than her word about the Christmas parties. We had dancing parties, and charade parties, and skating parties, snowballing parties, and church-decorating parties; and wherever we were there Mr. Hamilton was too, by Lady Meredith's special desire, "to cheer him up," as she said, though he never seemed to take much notice of any one or any thing, but escorted her and Nellie Fraser about almost in silence, save when something brought the quiet, sorrowful smile into his eyes and caused him to speak.

I was only twenty years of age then, and as romantic as a girl going to be married to her first love ought to be; therefore I very quickly arrived in my own mind at what I believed to be the only possible solution of the secret of Mr. Hamilton's lined brow and melancholy smile, and confidentially imparted it to one of my bosom friends—at twenty we always have such a number of

"Dearest friends"—Laura Mountjoy, a bright-eyed, careless coquette, who merely grimaced and shrugged her shoulders knowingly.

"You're all wrong, Lizzie mia," said she; "Mr. Hamilton is not quite the sentimental goose you make him out. I know 'the reason why,' though."

"Then what is it, Laura?" I asked, breathlessly.

"Oh, a naughty story, my dear!" she returned, shutting her eyes in another grimace. "Mr. Hamilton didn't stay all those years away in Asia for nothing."

My lips were parted in eagerness for another question, when I started at seeing Nellie Fraser come out of the shade of the window curtains, her eyes quite blazing with excitement, and a crimson spot glowing on each transparently pale cheek.

"Miss Mountjoy," she said, in a low, broken voice, "you ought to be more careful what you say. It is wrong and cruel and unjust to hint in that manner that an innocent person has committed some grievous sin."

"I declare!" cried Laura, amazedly—"I am not sure she did not say 'O Jupiter!'" She used to talk quite shockingly.

"Well, but you know you did, Miss Mountjoy," pleaded Nellie, more gently. "You said or hinted that Mr. Hamilton had some good or bad reason for staying out of the country; and, if you know anything of the story of his life, you know that it was because he had met with bitter wrong and sorrow, and that he left England nearly broken-hearted."

"His heart seems to be getting mended again," retorted Laura, with a disagreeable smile—Laura's manners were rather rude and "fast," I am sorry to say. "I know that there was some horrid work about a woman, and that Mr. Hamilton shot somebody, or tried to shoot him. I have often heard mamma talk about it." And Laura raised her voice and colored angrily at the unspoken reproach in Nellie Fraser's pure face. Yes, it was that, emphatically; apart from the charms of transparent complexion and silky, yellow hair, the proud purity of the maiden soul looked through the depths of those clear, gray eyes, the light of which nevertheless could flash keenly and stormily in anger or contempt, and lay in the curves around the sweet, girlish lips, the rosy outline of which was so primly chiselled.

"Then, if you know the truth of that—that—cruel story which blighted a good and honorable man's life, why do you make random assertions in that manner?" And Nellie Fraser's fair face grew paler and paler, and her gray eyes sparkled ominously as she spoke. "You know that there was 'no horrid work' about a woman, and that Mr. Hamilton never shot anybody."

"Really, Miss Fraser," stammered Laura, between astonishment and vexation, "I am not at all so *au fait* in Mr. Hamilton's affairs as you seem to be, nor do I take such a deep interest in them." Her sarcastic glance and meaning tones were unmistakable, and my first impulse to laugh at the jest changed in an instant as I looked at Nellie Fraser.

"What is the real truth of the matter, Nellie?" I interposed, hurriedly. "I have never heard a word about it before."

She did not reply for a few moments, evidently struggling passionately to control herself, while a hot tide of crimson surged over her fair neck and face, dyeing even her proud, white brow, and mapping out in dark, purple tracery the throbbing veins in her broad temples. There was more than mere girlish displeasure in those fierce, quick blushes and the passionate tears in her flashing eyes; and, with a sensation of my breath being taken away, I stood staring at her and Laura Mountjoy alternately.

"Lady Meredith will perhaps tell you, Lizzie, if you ask her," she said, in a sharp, agitated way; and then, with one haughty glance at Laura, a glance of stag-like courage and proud defiance, Eleanor Fraser—I could not think of her as "Nellie" then—swept out of the room. She might have been a Semiramis or a Diana, with her yellow hair and flowing robes of dark green.

"Dear me, Laura!" I ejaculated, opening my eyes as wide as they would go.

"Well!" exclaimed Laura, pretending to hum a tune while she fastened the brooch in her lace collarette, though her face was as red as a peony from Nellie Fraser's reproof.

"Are you one of the people who cannot see daylight through a forty-foot ladder, Lizzie?" she asked, with a scornful giggle in the midst of the refrain of "Meet me by Moonlight"—"I have already hinted that Laura's manners were not such as to be incapable of improvement. Laura had brothers, and Laura's brothers had grooms; and I

think the young lady's education had received its final polish in the atmosphere of—well, horse and dog and fox hunting society, to say the least.

"What, Laura?" I asked, completely mystified by the stable-yard phraseology of this last speech.

"I care not for all in the air,  
If I want the sweet light of your eyes!"

sang Laura, without condescending to answer me. "I nearly got into a scrape that time, didn't I, Lizzie? I never imagined it had gone so far as that, though of course I knew there was something in the wind."

"What are you saying, Laura?" I gasped.  
"What do you mean?"

But she only went on, tantalizingly—

"Must be told by the moonlight alone  
In the grove at the end of the vale,"

—and then, with Johnsonian savagery and abruptness—"Lizzie Haughton, don't try to pretend you are a fool!" And Laura disappeared with a bang of the door, leaving me really and truly as if I were rooted and growing in the centre of a bouquet of ferns and white lilies on Lady Meredith's Brussels carpet, until I heard the grinding of wheels on the gravel-drive outside, and Lady Meredith's voice in the hall, and it flashed across my mind that I had promised, half an hour before, to get ready for a drive with her. I had not five minutes to change my dress, and get on a new pair of gloves—which of course succumbed in the struggle, as those abominable things always do when one is in a hurry—and I put my boots on the wrong feet, but managed to present myself just as Lady Meredith was commencing to fidget.

Nellie drove the spirited gray ponies as usual, and, as usual, Mr. Hamilton sat on the back seat as escort, and beside me, grave and taciturn, also as usual, unless when addressed. He answered then with his curious, melancholy, bright smile, cheerfully and at length, and then relapsed into the silence that seemed to enfold him as closely as his great black-furred Russian cloak. None the gayer or happier did he seem for his visit to pleasant Cheshunt—on the contrary, he looked to me older and sadder than when I had seen him a few weeks before; and, as we sped along over the frosty road to the music of the ringing of the ponies' bells and the roll and crash of the wheels, I seemed to hear the ceaseless repetition

borne on the cold December wind as it swept sighingly past, "He had met with bitter wrong and sorrow, and left England nearly broken-hearted," and, thinking, in continuation, vaguely and uneasily of Laura Mountjoy's strange hints and the hot, beautiful flush on Nellie Fraser's girlish face, I went on building castles in the air with such extraordinary rapidity that from the topmost pinnacle of one I looked down quite terrified, lest my fanciful architecture could be descried in my conscious face by those stern, dark, luminous eyes which gazed coldly and wearily over the bare frost-hued landscape stretched out before them.

### CHAPTER III.

How strange, almost startlingly strange, is that sudden revelation which we obtain at times of the hidden depths and secret chambers, hitherto unseen and undreamt of, of characters which we have placidly assured ourselves we could read, if necessary, as easily as a page of royal octavo, while yet there were the mystery and the passions of an unknown life lying dormant, until our wandering, ignorant fingers press on some mainspring, or aimlessly move some master-key, and the familiar face and familiar soul whom we thought we knew perchance as our own vanish for the time, to give place to the strange being, the new mortal, whom we have never recognized before! And the one we knew of old never quite returns. That girl with the golden-brown sealskin cap resting on her fair, wavy hair could never quite again be simple Nellie Fraser with the pale, rose-tinted face and earnest, childlike eyes, since that brief glimpse I had had of the spirit of a proud, fond, passionate woman dwelling secretly in that pure, calm, maidenly breast.

What could it mean? Did it mean anything—anything more than my absurd ideas? But Laura Mountjoy's rather unbecoming jests! Surely Mr. Hamilton's grave middle-age and Eleanor Fraser's innocent youth should have protected them from such innuendoes.

My cheeks got quite red as I thought it over. How Ralph would have laughed at me! And how very much displeased Lady Meredith would have been, as she had once been before! Then I recurred to Ralph's dry smile and the remark he had made about Nellie Fraser; and then my thoughts

flowed in the direction of the tenth of January—the day fixed for my marriage. It was the twenty-eighth of December, and the horrid dressmaker had not even begun to make my French merino, and there was my blue morning dress not cut yet, and my—

"Nellie, my child, do hold those ponies in—they are so terribly fresh and frisky this morning!" and Lady Meredith's voice, in accents of nervous alarm, roused me suddenly out of my reverie.

"I am doing my best, Lady Meredith, but they do pull so. I have never seen them go on as they are doing now!" and Nellie, in a slight tone of impatient distress, clenched her little buff driving-gloves more tightly over the straight reins.

"Will you allow me to take them in hand for a few minutes, Miss Fraser?" said Mr. Hamilton, leaning over her. "Pray do; they will tire you so—and my wrists are slightly stronger than yours;" and he smiled quietly, tenderly, my suspicious eyes saw, as he drew the reins from the slender tired fingers.

Nellie had moved aside, almost brusquely, to allow his arms room between her and Lady Meredith—a movement due, as I thought regretfully afterwards, to Laura Mountjoy's remarks that morning; and, just as the powerful, manly grasp had brought the mettlesome ponies to their senses quite suddenly, the lightly hung phaeton jolted over some frozen mud and stones, and Nellie Fraser, leaning on the edge of the vehicle in an awkward half-standing position, was flung out heavily upon her face and hands.

Lady Meredith and I both shrieked; but before I could even collect myself to spring out, Mr. Hamilton had stopped the ponies, and was back, kneeling down on the cold white road where Nellie Fraser lay senseless, her pretty purple jacket white with the sparkling hoar-frost, her little coquettish fur cap had fallen off, and her uncovered fair head resting on Mr. Hamilton's arm.

I never told it until long afterwards—never even to Ralph, until he was my husband—the second revelation I had that day—when I saw the dark, calm, bearded face change pitifully into one twenty years younger in the agony of excitement and fear, and heard the usually placid voice hoarse and broken in the wild, yet suppressed cry, "Nellie—Nellie! Not dead, not killed, my dear, beautiful, innocent dar-

ling!" And he pushed me roughly away as I attempted to move her.

"Get some water—it is all frozen, I fear—try to get some water, Miss Haughton," he said, huskily, as he lifted the light burden up in his arms, and carried her back to the carriage, her pretty, white upturned face and poor little cut and bleeding lips resting against the great, curling, gray-streaked beard on his broad chest.

She was only stunned, and the application of a wet handkerchief, against which I had cleverly rubbed some icicles, as I could find no water, soon restored her; but she complained of having hurt her ankle, and lay back, supported by Lady Meredith, in tears, looking very ill, and trembling all over; and so we returned mournfully home through the pleasant, exhilarating morning air, Mr. Hamilton driving in silence.

However, when a few days had passed, Nellie seemed as well as ever and able to take a deep interest in the merits of pearl-colored silk and white roses; and there was a great deal of pleasant wedding business going on when we were all rather provoked and taken aback by Mr. Hamilton's abruptly taking his leave, pleading some urgent business matters, and bidding farewell rather coldly and formally to all except Lady Meredith, who nevertheless was in some doubt whether she would not go into a downright passion about it.

"And to go off in that manner," she said, angrily, flattening a wreath under her elbow—"even before my poor little Nellie was quite well after her accident! And I had so looked forward to his being here when the wedding was over, and every one else gone away, to read to us in the evenings, or play chess with me, and talk to Nellie about the Siberian mountains and the steppes and the snow, as he used—There—dear me, child, I've destroyed those azaleas for your dress—totally ruined them!" And Lady Meredith fretfully flung the crushed blossoms aside among a heap of shreds of white ribbon and lace.

Nellie Fraser, I think, alone of all the household, uttered no word of regret.

\* \* \* \* \*

I did not sit down to chronicle my own history or affairs; therefore I shall self-denyingly pass over that delightful, thrillingly interesting time that elapsed between the sunny winter morning when I quitted dear, beautiful, hospitable Cheshunt, one of the

happiest girls in the world who had never just taken off her white *glace* and orange-blossoms and put on her new mauve silk and violet velvet bonnet with white roses, and the time when I returned, a month later, quite a self-posseessed matron, anxious on the subject of housekeeping and excited about butchers' bills.

Ralph and I had come for a stay of only a couple of days before we finally settled in our own home and he returned to his patients, who, as he said, laughing loudly, most unaccountably seemed to have had nothing the matter with them while he was away—of course there was a brother-physician who looked after them in Ralph's absence.

Between the excitement of returning amongst old friends and the pleasure of hearing glad welcomes and kind wishes, the two days fled away, and it was not until the afternoon of our departure, when I sat down in Lady Meredith's dressing-room for a long quiet chat, that the intangible something which had given me uneasiness since the first hour of our return recurred afresh, and, in doubt whether I ought to speak or be silent on the subject, I commenced cautiously.

"Is Nellie quite well again, Lady Meredith?"

"I hope so, my dear. Do you think she does not look well? Nellie always is pale, you know," said Lady Meredith, anxiously.

"No," I replied, decisively, "she is not well—Ralph says so. He said so the first evening we were here."

To my surprise, Lady Meredith did not instantly reply. To my alarm, I saw she was looking doubtful and troubled.

"I don't know what can be the matter with the child," she said, slowly. "You know how I try to make her happy, Lizzie; but she seems so spiritless and restless lately. This place is too quiet and lonely for her, I am sure; I think I shall take her to Switzerland, and have a villa there for the summer, Lizzie. I told her so, but she did not seem to care."

I cannot tell what suggested it to me, but I asked suddenly and irrelevantly—

"When did you last see Laura Mountjoy?"

To my renewed surprise, Lady Meredith frowned and knitted with such angry velocity that she dropped nine out of every ten stitches.

"Not for a long while," she said, shortly—"and I do not wish to see Laura again for some time. She was very rude to Nellie—talked, and made some very unkindly remarks to her."

"About whom?" I asked, with intense eagerness.

"About whom?" echoed Lady Meredith, frowning again. "What do you mean, Lizzie?"

"Because," answered I, determined to say it out now, being convinced that there was some strange secret somewhere which it was my duty as a woman to find out, "she annoyed Nellie in the same way once before about Mr. Hamilton."

"Gracious mercy! Lizzie—Nellie—I mean, Lizzie Seymour," gasped Lady Meredith, dropping her work and spectacles both into the fender, "you don't mean to say that you know anything—I mean did Laura say—I mean, dear me, I have never heard anything like this in my life!" And Lady Meredith, unwilling to disturb her prim "buckle" curls, made the white satin ribbons stand on end above her cap. "It was just the day after your wedding, Lizzie, and it was a wet, dull morning, and I had been lamenting that Mr. Hamilton was not here, and Laura began teasing the poor child about being married and being Mrs. Somebody, and the poor lamb flushed crimson"—I was very near bursting out laughing at this stage of the tragic recital—"it was at something Laura had said, you know, and I just caught the name, and I said, 'Laura, pray explain yourself'—and, dear me, goodness gracious," cried her ladyship again, "to think of any one speaking so of poor, quiet Gerald Hamilton!"

"Ah!" I ejaculated, remembering the scene of the carriage-accident.

Ralph and I had been talking a little on this subject—a private matrimonial discussion—and, as sensible married people, we had a right to make remarks to each other on those lonely wandering barques which we descried from our safe harbor of wedlock tossing aimlessly about on the ocean of life—that is what Ralph said, and I think it quite poetical—and after the discussion I had jumped to a conclusion without telling my husband. I always do jump to conclusions, and they are always right—I mean nearly always.

"Lady Meredith," said I, with such an air of solemn importance that the poor old

lady mechanically smoothed down her dress and folded her hands as she does during sermon-time, and then I told her the whole story as smoothly and as graphically as the people who meet in railway-carriages, or are awaiting dinner, in Christmas magazine stories, always do; only I had mine made up beforehand—the whole story, and Laura Mountjoy's story likewise, reserving only my own delightful suspicions.

I was almost sorry when I saw how it had pained and shocked my auditor.

"Oh, poor Gerald!" the old lady nearly sobbed. Lady Meredith was frightfully tender about love-affairs, unhappy ones especially. "I can scarcely believe it, Lizzie. But you say you could not be mistaken! Oh, poor Gerald! And Laura to say that! Mrs. Mountjoy ought to be ashamed of herself, and I shall tell her so! Poor Gerald! No, Lizzie, only a young man's folly, poor boy! He was only twenty-three, and a wicked woman—a handsome actress—bewitched him, and he married her, and his family disowned him; and then, to help out his troubles, he found that the wicked creature, after loading him with debt through her extravagance, was not his wife at all, and ran away from him to her first husband, as bad and abominable a wretch as she was herself; and then poor Gerald, maddened with his troubles and shame and grief, met the man one day and fired at him. The fellow wasn't hurt," said Lady Meredith, regretfully, "and, for a good sum of hush-money, decamped to America and was heard of no more; but poor Gerald Hamilton was never the same again. He went abroad a few months afterwards, and has been away at intervals nearly all these last twenty years; and to think that now! Lizzie, I cannot credit it. Bless my heart and soul!" and she stood erect. "Perhaps that was what he meant in the note he wrote me yesterday—no, I burnt it, Lizzie—it isn't there—he said that he was going abroad again, that he found advancing years only brought a more lonely life to him, and that it would have been better for him if he had never returned to England, unfitted for society and its pleasures as he was—oh, poor, poor Gerald!"

"Ah!" ejaculated I again. I have never felt so like the oracle at Delphi—that woman who used to sit on a tripod, or hide herself in the myrtle-tree—as I did then. "You think, then, that there is no chance,

Lady Meredith—for him, I mean?" I hinted, rejoicing secretly all the time over my delightful suspicions.

"Chance!" exclaimed Lady Meredith, staring at me to see if I had lost my senses. "What chance, Lizzie? Is it—do you mean—that—that child—young enough to be his daughter—My dear, such an idea!"

"Ah!" ejaculated I for the third time, and slipped away with an excuse.

Clever people often find that they have given themselves a great deal of unnecessary trouble about a matter which solves itself very easily if let alone, and an elaborate plot of mine was overturned in this instance by my simply perceiving, as I came to the head of the stairs, that Mr. Hamilton's horse was standing at the door, and Mr. Hamilton himself standing in the hall below.

"Called to take leave," I thought, and flew back towards Lady Meredith's apartments, and into the cream-and-rose-chintz-lined bedroom, nearly knocking down Ralph on my way, and then shutting the door in his face as he tried to question me.

Nellie was there, very pale, very spiritless, tamely making a white llama jacket.

I very properly pulled it out of her hand and flung it across the room.

"Mr. Hamilton is down-stairs, come to bid you good-by," said I. "I jump to conclusions. You know I told you."

She rose, and then sat down irresolutely, while the little hand that I held treacherously clutched my fingers convulsively.

"A last farewell," said I, sadly.

Ralph says my behaviour was simply audacious.

"Where is he going? I have never heard of it," she said; and I saw that the poor child's white, dry lips could scarcely form the words.

"Going abroad, he told Lady Meredith—forever, I believe," I went on cruelly; "won't you come to say good-by to him, Nellie?"

"Oh, certainly!" said she, in a low tone, moving towards the door.

I had a great notion of letting her go in that manner!

I put my arms around her and held her fast.

"Do you know why he is going away, Nellie?" I whispered.

"No," she replied; and in her swift ris-

ing blushes and alarmed gaze I read the simple truth of this reply.

"Will you ask him to stay, my darling?" I said.

Dear me! I felt like a mother in Israel, so wise and matronly, as I hid Nellie's flushed, quivering face on my breast.

"Lizzie—Mrs. Seymour!" she cried, struggling to free herself, and to prevent my seeing what was as visible as the spring sunlight on her golden hair—poor dear, innocent child!

But Mrs. Seymour considered she had said quite enough, and for reply took Nellie into forcible custody until they had both reached the drawing-room door; then the poor little palpitating captive was released, and we entered quietly together.

He was standing by the fire, his arm resting on the mantel-piece; and even at that moment my heart sank when I looked at his dark, middle-aged face and gray beard, and at the sweet young creature in the very freshness of her fair life's morning standing beside me.

But the glory of her noble, true womanhood kindled and rose in the pure, brave eyes—the more ardently and tenderly, I believe, because of his haggard gaze and sad, lined brow; and, with the sweet, kind smile that makes a plain woman beautiful and a beautiful one angelic, she went over to him with outstretched hand. He grasped it passionately, and held it in both his own.

I was newly married—Mr. Hamilton had never seen me since I had been a bride—and I naturally expected some slight civility—polite wishes, and so forth; but Mr. Hamilton never noticed me—never spoke to me—I think I might almost say he never saw me. Now, thought I, what am I to do? I cannot play spy here any longer, yet goodness knows if—those elderly lovers are so humbly conscious of their own shortcomings, and so forth—he will not be as kind and stupid as possible, unless I enlighten him in some way.

But, as if some good angel had showed him a light on the path where lay his earthly bliss, I saw the dark, sternly handsome face catching the radiance of the melancholy, smiling eyes, the radiance of a new-found joy, and, with but a few murmured words, the purport of which I did not hear

or try to hear, he stooped like a great rugged oak to a frail sweet spring blossom, and I withdrew and shut the door.

Then of course, without an instant's delay, I flew to Lady Meredith, and hugged her until she got seriously angry concerning her cap and collar, when I transferred my exuberant attentions to my wedded husband and boxed his ears, when he too grumbled under maltreatment; and then I waltzed round the room with a small table, and finally informed my astounded companions that I did not know what to do with myself, I was so delighted.

A few words explained all—at least as far as Ralph was concerned, who, as he had the assurance to tell us now, "always knew how things would turn out." But Lady Meredith refused to credit the evidence of any senses but her own, until I led the unbelieving old dear by the sleeve into the drawing-room; and there stood Miss Nellie—the little chit—prettier, prouder, and more joyful than I had ever seen her before, standing by her chosen lord's side, clasping his large strong right arm with both her waxen, fairy-like hands, and Gerald Hamilton looking as if his youth had been given back to him again unblighted.

Later in the day he came and stood beside me.

"From what Nellie has told me," he said—and her name seemed like music on his lips—"I believe I owe to you, Mrs. Seymour, next to Heaven, the happiness of this day, perhaps the happiness of my life."

I tried to say something, but he went on, holding my hand in that peculiar impressive manner which I believe he learned from the stately old Asiatic chieftains.

"I have uttered none of the commonplace polite wishes for your welfare, but I wish now, upon my soul"—and his voice sank low—"that the joy and gladness you have helped to give this day may return in sunshine on your own wedded life forever!"

I declare the tears rolled down my cheeks—as I said to Ralph, how could one help adoring a man that talked like that? Ralph replied that he hoped one could.

Only three weeks later the joy and gladness were in brighter sunshine on his own wedded life and that of his sweet young wife, fair Nellie Hamilton.



## **LEON MEYER.**

Whitney, E J

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### **LEON MEYER.**

**BY E. J. WHITNEY.**

**WHEN** Leon Meyer came home from school, his mother looked up in amazement, he came in so softly, instead of rushing in like a whirlwind, as usual. He was a long time doing the chores, and when he came in his eyes were red with weeping.

"Are you ill, Leon?" asked his mother.

"You have scarcely tasted your supper."

"I don't feel very well," he replied.

"Been having another fight with Tom Boynton, eh?" queried his father.

"No sir," hesitatingly.

"What did I tell you, Leon, the last time you had trouble with that boy?" scowling.

"You said if you heard of any more, that you would give me a flogging."

"I always keep my word," significantly.

"Well, have you had any more trouble, eh?"

"Not much, sir."

Mr. Meyer frowned, saying, angrily:

"If you lie to me, Leon, you will wish you had never been born."

"Mr. Meyer!" interposed his wife.

"I am managing this boy, Mrs. Meyer, and I will not have any interference," he frowned.

"Let me tell, papa, please," cried Lily.

"Lily Meyer!" sternly.

"Please let me tell, papa," she plead, her tiny hands clasped, and tears rolling down her cheeks.

"I will punish you severely if you say another word," stormed the father. "Things have come to a pretty pass if I am to be bearded in my own house, and by my own children. Mrs. Meyer, put that child to bed," as Lily sobbed, pitifully.

"Don't cry, Lily," whispered Leon, as his sister bade him good-night. "Perhaps papa will let me tell him."

"You haven't kissed papa, Lily," prompted her mother.

With a quick movement the child slipped from the room. Mr. Meyer had lost his good-night kiss.

"Now, sir," scowling fiercely as his glance fell on the trembling boy. "Have you had trouble with Tom Boynton to-day?"

"Yes sir, but—"

"I want no buts. Yes or no."

"Yes sir," reluctantly.

"Take off your coat, sir. I'll learn you to quarrel and fight. Did your teacher flog you to-day?"

The boy looked up in surprise. "Tom Boynton lied to him, sir, so he flogged me."

"Aint you ashamed of yourself to get flogged twice in one day? I'll not have you laying all your faults on Tom Boynton. He is a rich man's son, and behaves as well as you, I dare say." And the lash came down with stinging force.

The cruel taunts aroused the boy's spirit, and he raised his face, from which every vestige of color had fled, a vivid fire glowing in his soft blue eyes. Not a moan escaped the pale lips through the cruel ordeal.

"You may go now," said his father, at last, somewhat alarmed at the pale set face; "and if I ever hear such an account of you again, I'll flog you half to death."

In a paroxysm of rage and grief, Leon hurried to his chamber and flung himself on the bed.

In a few moments the door swung softly open and a tender loving voice exclaimed:

"My darling boy!" And her warm tears fell on his face as she clasped him in her arms.

"O mother, mother, I wish I were dead!" he cried, bitterly.

"No, no, my son, you must not say that, it is wicked," gently, yet firmly.

"I can't—help—it. Father is—so—so," he sobbed.

"Can it be true that my boy was so disobedient that he was punished?" asked his mother, reproachfully.

"No, no, mother, Tom Boynton lied to the teacher, and he flogged me. You see," eagerly, "the desk has been filled with rubbish for several days, and yesterday Mr. Blake said he would flog the one severely that did it, if it was repeated. Well, when we got there this morning, there was the desk fuller than ever. Mr. Blake was terribly angry, and said he would punish each pupil, if he could not find the guilty one, any other way."

"Here's a knife," exclaimed Tom, who was helping clear the desk.

"Let me see it," said Mr. Blake.

"Tom handed it to him.

"Who owns this knife?" And, O, how stern his voice was, as he held it up."

"You can't imagine how astonished I was, mother, when I saw Mr. Blake held the knife I lost so long ago."

"I remember," softly.

With a grateful look Leon went on.

"It's mine, sir," said I."

"That was right, my darling."

"Yours!" in a surprised tone.

"Yes sir."

"How came your knife in my desk?"

"I don't know, sir. I lost it a long time ago."

"If you please, sir," spoke up that mean Tom Boynton, "I saw him have it last night."

"Last night! Are you sure?"

"Yes sir."

"Leon Meyer," exclaimed the teacher, with awful sternness, "I must say that I am greatly disappointed in you. There was not one here but what I would have suspected of such conduct, as soon, or sooner, than of you. You, in whom I have placed such confidence, and whom I have considered one of my best pupils, to fill my desk with rubbish, and then deny it; again, you tell another falsehood about your knife, when you are found out. I could not have believed it of you. These are two grave offences, and require severe punishment."

"I didn't fill your desk, and I certainly lost my knife, sir," I replied, as firmly as I could, but the tears would come to my eyes when I saw how sad he looked.

"If you confess, your punishment will be lighter," was all he said.

"I have nothing to confess, sir, for I have told the truth," I said, in agony.

"Your obstinacy (for I can call it nothing else) is extremely reprehensible. I am more pained than I can say, but I must perform my duty. Hold out your hand, Leon."

"Every blow seemed to strike here," putting his hand on his heart. "I hardly felt them on my hands."

"My poor boy!" murmured his mother, kissing the poor blistered hands; "it is better to suffer wrong, than to do wrong. Don't grieve so, it will come right sometime," as Leon still sobbed drearily.

She little thought how soon her words would be verified.

"I don't care for the punishment as I do for the name of it. It is too bad, too bad! That mean Tom Boynton's at the bottom of it, I know. O, I hope he'll catch it!" clenching his fists. "And I have been so proud of being the most exemplary pupil in school. O dear!"

"Hush, hush, my son," gently; "you are giving place to the two worst enemies one can have, anger and revenge."

"I can't help it, mamma, Tom is so hateful and mean, and is always doing something to plague me. He taunted me all the way home of being flogged, and hoped I should be again. And—and, mamma dear, I struck him."

"Leon!" gravely.

"Yes, I did, but I was sorry the next minute."

"I am very, very sorry that my boy should forget so soon the good lessons he has received."

"I only forgot a minute, and although he struck me two or three times afterwards, I didn't strike him again."

"That was right. What first began the trouble between you?"

"He has hated me ever since I won the prize last spring."

A long pause.

"Leon, my love, have you thought that perhaps you needed this lesson?"

"O mamma," reproachfully.

"Just think a moment, dear. Haven't you been proud of your easily acquired learning? Have you not been inclined to look down on ignorant people?"

"I am afraid I have sometimes, mamma,"

was the thoughtful reply. "Isn't it wrong to be so very ignorant? I always thought it was."

"It is wrong and foolish, also, where it can be prevented; but many are so from necessity, and not from choice. Learning opens many avenues of pleasure, ennobles the possessor, commands profitable employment; while ignorance is superstitious and degrading."

"How angry father was!" sighed the boy, after a slight pause. "He wouldn't let me explain a word."

"Some one must have misrepresented the affair to him," said Mrs. Meyer, a blush of shame suffusing her face, as she thought of her hasty-tempered husband.

"He might have let me told him. O dear! I wish he was like Willie Ryde's father, then I could please him sometimes."

"Do not think of it any more, but try to go to sleep, dear. Good-night."

"You've been coddling that disobedient son of yours, all this time, I suppose," sneered Mr. Meyer, as his wife entered the room.

"It took me a long time to soothe Lily, she was so excited," was the quiet reply. "Since then I have been talking with Leon."

"Things have come to a pretty pass, I think, when a man can't correct a disobedient headstrong boy without such a fuss," retorted Mr. Meyer, angrily, as he paced the floor.

"You are mistaken, Francis," said his wife, gently. "Leon has done no wrong, except—"

"O no, Leon can't do wrong," sneered Mr. Meyer, savagely. "Of course it wasn't wrong for him to fight Tom Boynton, the rascal!"

"Except to give a blow in return for bitter taunts," quietly and firmly went on the lady. "A blow repented of directly."

A quick slam of the door announced Mr. Meyer's departure.

You may think that this gentleman was not very agreeable, but if you asked his opinion, he would tell you you were much mistaken, for he was usually very pleasant. An opinion he had the pleasure of indulging alone.

Some weeks later, Leon came rushing in from school, eyes and cheeks aglow, as he exclaimed:

"The pond is frozen like a rock, and there will be splendid skating to-morrow."

Most all the boys have new skates, and are going in for a glorious time. Can't I go too, father?"

Meyer scowled as he laid down his paper, saying testily:

"No, you can't."

"Why not, sir? I'll be very careful."

"I said no, I believe, and when I say no, I mean no; so not another word," angrily. "You were gone last Saturday, and you'll saw wood to-morrow, young man."

Leon swallowed very hard as he said, respectfully, "I'll finish the wood in good season, if you will let me go, sir."

"I'll flog you within an inch of your life, sir, if you go, so go if you dare," was the savage response.

Leon flushed with anger as he left the room. His lowering brow at supper-time brought a sharp reproof from his father, who ordered him to bed.

The next day was clear and bright. Leon worked away on the wood slowly, and, I am sorry to say, sulkily. He was no wise cheered as the boys went gayly by, swinging their skates and calling for him to join them.

"It's awful mean," exclaimed Willie Ryde; "I shan't have a bit of fun if you are not there."

"I'm awful sorry, Willie, but I can't," replied Leon, dolefully.

"It's a burning shame," then brightly. "I tell you what it is, Leon, I'll help you do the wood, and then you can go and look on, if you can't skate."

And the little fellow went to work with a will. Leon didn't relish the idea of looking on, but grateful for Willie's sympathizing help, he worked briskly, and was soon talking merrily.

"Ha, ha, if this aint nice, staying to home sawing wood, instead of going down to the pond. Look at my new skates. There isn't such a splendid pair in town," proudly, "'cause father got 'em in Boston." Tom plumed himself greatly on his father being the richest man in town.

"They're no better than the pair Uncle Walter sent me," said Leon.

Tom was angry directly, and calling Leon all manner of names, finally walked off in a towering passion. The wood was soon finished, and Leon ran into the house to ask his mother if he might go and see the skaters. A ready consent was given, and the two boys bounded away like deers.

Two or three hours later there was a quick ring of the bell, and a frightened little boy gasped, as Mrs. Meyer opened the door:

"O, if you please, ma'am, they're a bringin' him right home. And," with a wild burst of tears, "he's drowned, he's drowned."

With a sharp cry Mrs. Meyer caught at the door for support, as she saw a procession coming up the street, bearing a senseless burden.

"Don't be frightened, ma'am," said the man who seemed the one in authority, as he saw her deathly face; "he isn't dead, but jest fainted like a girl, when I pulled him out of the water. Poor little feller!" tenderly laying the still form on the sofa. "You've reason to be mighty proud o' this boy, Miss Meyer, I can tell you! It isn't many that would have shown such pluck, 'specially for sich a cross-grained chap."

"How did it happen?" inquired Mrs. Meyer, as she tried to revive her son.

"Why, you see, ma'am, that contrary critter, Tom Boynton, would go where the ice was thin, in spite of the boys' warning. Of course he went in, and this plucky little chap dived right in after him. Tom's pretty heavy, and he was awful scared, so he grabbed your boy round the neck, and down they both went to the bottom of the pond. I heard the boys screaming like all possessed, as I was going home across lots, so I run to see what was the matter, for I knew something was up by the yells. And matter enough it was, with two boys a drownin' close to the shore. They'd been down twice, they told me, and your son was a hangin' onto a piece of ice with one hand, and holding that ere feller with the other, when I got there. We got 'em out mighty quick, ma'am, but this poor little chap had hit his arm somehow, so it's broke, I guess. Well, here's the doctor, so I'll go. I hope he'll get on well, ma'am. Plucky, if he is little."

Leon's arm was dressed, he was given an opiate, and put to bed.

Of course the news spread like wildfire. Some said both boys were drowned while skating; others said there was only one. Mr. Meyer heard that Leon had broken through the ice while skating, and white with rage hurried home.

Mrs. Meyer had sat with Leon until he had become quiet, and had just gone into

the kitchen to prepare a bowl of gruel, when her husband rang the bell.

"Where is Leon?" he demanded, sternly, of the maid.

"Abed, sir, in course, afther being almost drowned the day," she replied.

"Bid him come to me," thundered the irate father. "I'll learn him to disobey me."

"Indade, sir, but the docthor gave him some medicine and put him to bed, sir, and he can't get up."

"Did you hear me?" with a stamp of the foot. "Do as I bid you or leave."

The girl left the room muttering, "I'm thankful ye are not my father, ye thafe o' the world."

"Master Leon, ye poor darlint! yer ugly ould father says ye have got to go to him. And," in a shrill whisper, "I guess he is going to flog ye, for I see the divil in his eye."

Poor Leon, trembling with fear and pain, tried to rise, but fell back with a groan.

"I can't go, Katie; it's no use to try," he said, faintly.

"Then I'll help you, you young rascal!" exclaimed a voice; and Mr. Meyer seized him roughly by the shoulder. "Get up, I say!" dragging him from the bed.

With a cry that rang in his ears for months, Leon fainted.

"Good gracious, Meyer! are you crazy?" cried a voice; and turning, the angry man saw Mr. Boynton and the minister looking at him.

"My son, my son, your father has killed you!" shrieked Mrs. Meyer, who had hurried in from the kitchen.

Such confusion as there was! The doctor was again summoned, the poor broken arm newly bandaged, and the doctor wore a grave face long before Leon recovered from his deathlike swoon.

Mr. Meyer paced the room in an agony of fear and remorse. Mr. Boynton's story did not reassure him, either.

Fever set in, and for weeks Leon's life was despaired of. At last he began to gain. Mr. Boynton was a constant visitor, bringing fruits, wines, and books and papers, declaring he could never show his admiration and gratitude to the preserver of his son.

Tom, who was really kind-hearted, struck with remorse, begged Leon's forgiveness, and then went bravely and confessed to the whole school that he had filled the teacher's

desk, and that Leon had suffered undeservedly.

Mr. Blake, after commending him for his confession, spoke about the too frequent sin of false accusation, and warned the school to beware of sowing the seeds of future remorse and sorrow. He then spoke in warm praise of Leon, who not only forgave unkindness, but risked his life even for him who had injured him.

As soon as school closed Mr. Blake (who heartily rejoiced that his favorite pupil was innocent) hurried to Mr. Meyer's.

"My dear boy," he exclaimed, as he took Leon's thin wasted hands in a warm clasp, "I have come to tell you that I now know you were innocent of the charge for which I punished you, and I ask your pardon for not trusting your word."

Leon's lips quivered, and the tears were in his eyes as he replied, simply:

"You could not help believing me guilty, sir."

Mr. Blake shook his head.

"I was too hasty. I quite long to have my favorite pupil back again, Mrs. Meyer," turning to that lady.

"You said it would all come right, dear mamma, and it has," cried Leon, joyfully. "I am so happy."

Leon's convalescence passed very pleasantly, for the boys went often to see him, and Willie Ryde kept him informed about all that was going on at school, besides playing various games, such as checkers, and so forth, with him.

The painful thought that Mr. Meyer had gone through had done him good; for the slumbering love he had for his children had awakened to active life. He was greatly pained to see Leon grow silent and *distract* whenever he entered the room, and seem relieved when he left. Lily, too, avoided him, no longer climbing his knee and calling him her "dear good papa," he saw with sorrow.

"Leon," he said, gently, one day, as they were alone, "why is it that you are more pleased to see Dr. Gray and Mr. Boynton than your father, who loves you?"

Leon looked up with heightened color, but was silent.

"Why is it, my son?" kindly.

"I—I—" stammered the boy.

"My dear boy, have I lost your love by my cruel hasty temper? Words cannot express my sorrow for the past, and I ask you

to forgive me." His voice was husky with emotion.

"I!" cried Leon, excitedly. "O father, I didn't think you cared for my love." And he threw himself into his father's outstretched arms in a passion of tears.

From that moment Mr. Meyer was a changed man. He became an earnest Christian, and you cannot find a happier family to-day than his.

"I am so happy, mamma dearest," whispered Leon, joyfully, as his mother kissed him good-night, "for father *does* love me, after all. I am so glad I broke my arm, and it's most well now," with a sigh of content.

Beware, my young friends, of yielding to a quick temper, for, beside the heinous sin, you are likely to make the whole household unhappy.

## LESTER CLAYTON'S WARD.

BY JOHN A. PETERS.

In an old, rickety house, by the side of a deep, dark forest, nearly overshadowed by the thick, tangled branches of innumerable trees, Mildred Rocheford lay dying. Dark and stormy it was without; a cruel, merciless wind sweeping rudely by with its devastating force, sending the huge raindrops in torrents against the window-panes, and awaying to and fro the grand old forest trees, until they seemed in imminent danger each moment of being torn up from their roots. Ever and anon the heavens were lit up with, and made perfectly resplendent by, vivid chains of lightning, which gleamed athwart the wrathful sky for an instant, only to be succeeded by darkness doubly, awfully intense; and now and then the sound of terrible, majestic thunder burst forth with solemn distinctness upon the earth, and, penetrating sharply into the interior of the old hut, created a dreary, uncanny noise, which frightened sadly the slender, pale-faced little maiden who knelt there in sorrow by the bedside of her dying mother.

"O my God! will Lester Clayton never, never come?" The dying woman raised herself in the bed with a mighty effort, and wrung her pale, emaciated hands spasmodically together, as she wailed forth the words, rendered scarcely audible by the warring of the elements without; and then, with a heart-broken sigh, her head lay back on the pillow again, and she lay there white and motionless as the dead.

The young girl started up with a bitter cry. "Mother! mother!" she shrieked. But no voice answered her; no sound broke

the awful stillness of that room save the dull, monotonous thud of the rain as it beat a discordant *reveille* upon the roof, and the wind as it rushed by in its maddening fury, sounding not unlike the last despairing sigh or agonizing groan of a lost, remorseful spirit, full of pain, as it died away in the distance; and Mildred Rocheford's daughter started shudderingly back from the bedside, wringing her hands in bitter agony, and weeping great, burning tears, thinking her mother was no more.

"Dead! dead!" she cried; "and, oh! *what* will become of me now? Mother, mother!" And little Miriam leaned sobbingly over the white, saintly face, just as Mrs. Rocheford, who had only fainted, came back to consciousness.

"Miriam, where are you?" she called.

"Here, mother," the girl said, as she took the thin hand in her chill palm. "O mother, you lay there so cold and still, and your face was so deathly white, I feared you were dead. Oh, you will not, *must* not die, and leave me all alone in this cold, heartless world! Tell me, mother, you will not die, and leave your little Miriam all alone!" And the child gazed up with an earnest, pleading glance in the starry, midnight orbs that were looking down upon her with ineffable tenderness.

Stifling with a great effort the convulsive sobs that threatened to overwhelm her as she thought of leaving her daughter to battle with the heartless world, without, perhaps, a single protector, Mrs. Rocheford said, "Alas! Miriam, I would that I might remain with you longer, but God's hand is

beckoning me on, and ere many more moments shall have elapsed I shall have passed away from this world of sin and sorrow, and be, I trust, forever at rest. My only regret is in leaving you unprovided for. O my God! what will become of my poor child if Lester Clayton does not come?" A shudder shook her frame; her face grew, if possible, more ghastly and corpse-like than ever; and again little Miriam believed that her mother was no more. But it was only a passing faintness, and ere long she resumed, —

"Miriam, it is hard, intensely hard, for you to know that ere another sun shall shine with all his dazzling glory down upon this sin-stained world your mother will be numbered amongst the dead; but He who in his infinite mercy is compassionate to all those who put their trust in him will never forsake my little daughter. What time is it now, child?"

"It is on the stroke of twelve, mother," Miriam replied, after looking at the grotesque-faced clock that ticked monotonously on, little heeding that with every passing moment it was ticking away the life of the pallid, beautiful woman lying on yonder couch, with hair of midnight blackness falling in clustering masses around a face lovely as a poet's dream.

"Nearly twelve," the woman murmured, "and Lester Clayton not here yet. It cannot be he has forgotten his playmate! God grant he may come soon, or I know not what will happen to Miriam. I have but a few minutes more to live, and I have so much to say, and my strength is even now deserting me. Miriam," she again called.

"Yes, mother. What can I do for you?" And the child pushed back from her brow the heavy masses of golden hair falling in an almost inextricable state of confusion around her, as she bent tenderly over the bed whereon reposed her dying mother.

"I want you to hand me the bottle, Miriam, that you will find on yonder stand. Something assures me that Lester Clayton will be here soon, and I wish to revive my sinking spirits sufficiently to think of what I have to communicate to him. Have you found it, child?"

"Yes, mother: here it is," the young girl answered, handing her the vial.

Mrs. Rocheford grasped it with trembling hands, and, applying it to her mouth, managed to force a part of its contents down her

throat. The cordial appeared to revive her, and she lay there apparently calm and quiet, when suddenly the clock rang out loud and clear the hour of midnight; but ere the sound had ceased echoing through the gloomy room the door was thrown abruptly open, and a tall, stately man, enveloped in a huge black cloak, with a big hat slouched low over his face, came with rapid, noiseless steps into the apartment. Hastily divesting himself of cloak and hat, he tossed them, wet and glistening, in a heap in one corner of the room, and then went up to the bedside, and looked down upon Mildred Rocheford, who lay there tranquil and still, and unutterably beautiful, a great peace athwart her exquisite face; a transcendently happy light shining from her liquid orbs, as she encountered the glance of Lester Clayton, her former playmate, after the lapse of twelve years.

"And so you have come at last, Lester? I feared that ere my urgent message could reach you I should have passed away from this world of sorrow. But God is merciful; he has heard my prayer. And how have you been these many years?" she queried, watching with unwonted tenderness the working of his bronzed, handsome face.

"As well, nay, better than might have been expected, Mildred, after my painful rejection by you. O Milly!" he went on, with tender cadence, "after you refused me, and eloped with Guy Rocheford, I prayed that I might die, so deeply, passionately, I loved you then! But now, after long and dreary years have passed into oblivion, I can meet your eyes without feeling for you more than a brother's tenderness. And now, Milly, may I inquire the reason of your sending for me this dark and stormy night, when all things in nature are at variance? Can I render you any assistance?"

"You can, Lester, if you so desire. I am dying! Already I feel life's fitful breath leaving my body, and I realize full well that my allotted time on earth is short; and ere my weary soul escapes from its frail tenement of flesh, I would have you promise that, for the sake of the years dead and gone, you will become a father to my child, who will soon be motherless."

The petition was preferred in a pleading, wistful tone, her large dark eyes peering mournfully into his, as if she would penetrate into the innermost recesses of his



heart, and interpret there his every thought and feeling.

"I promise, Mildred. I will faithfully and lovingly accomplish every act, however difficult or trivial, you may exact of me, and will become, as far as it lies within my power, a father to Miriam; and as I deal with the trust you are about to repose in me, so may He, who is now overlooking us, and listening to our every word, deal with me!"

The words were uttered in a low, solemn tone that thrilled through and through Mildred Rocheford's frame. She cast one long, loving glance at him who twelve years ago had asked her to be his wife, and, with the names of Lester and Miriam upon her lips, she fell back dead.

A piercing, prolonged shriek from little Miriam, and down on the floor by her dead mother she knelt, burying her face in her hands, her wealth of cloudy golden hair falling disorderly about her; her soft blue eyes brimful of tears, which ever and anon fell in glistening drops upon her dead mother's face; while the wind and rain without still blended their voices together into one dirge-like refrain, sending a weird, vague feeling of impending evil to Lester Clayton's heart, which he never forgot to his dying day. And there on a couch, with a face faultless as an angel's, a smile of seraphic loveliness still hovering around her lips, lay the cold and inanimate form of the once gifted and fascinating Mildred Rocheford. And Lester Clayton knew that henceforth he had a vow to fulfill, a duty to accomplish, in order to keep his words pure to the dead; and there arose in his heart a profound feeling of love and tenderness for Milly's child, who was now parentless, and, stooping down, he imprinted a kiss on his *protege's* lips, murmuring softly, —

"Yes, Mildred, I will rigidly adhere to my vow. Miriam shall be to me as a daughter; that is, if" — A dark shadow swept across his handsome face as he checked himself, and, in uncontrollable agitation, he started up, and began pacing the floor, muttering words to himself that must have troubled him wonderfully, judging by the uneasiness his open countenance displayed.

All at once "How will Georgia like it?" burst involuntarily from his quivering lips. Going up to the table, he took from his vest-pocket a photograph, scanning with partial eyes the proud, high-bred face en-

graved thereon, and which certainly looked grand and beautiful beyond compare as the rays of light flashed artistically from the lamp upon it.

"My proud, beautiful one!" he said, rapturously, kissing the picture again and again as he reflected. "Only two more days, and the brilliant belle, the haughty, peerless Georgia Verne, will be my wife, and my happiness will be complete." Yet even as he repeated the words a vague presentiment of coming evil oppressed him, and warned him that his glowing dream might not come to pass. But, stifling his conscience, he bade the terrible feeling begone, and, wrapped in an Elysian dream, he sat there hour after hour, not heeding in the least the slender maiden, who, exhausted by sorrow, had at last fallen asleep by the side of the dead; not heeding the storm without, which still kept up its stupendous fury; sat there while the rain beat upon the roof, and dashed against the sides of the old cabin, and tinkled on the window-panes, while the wind shrieked through the spectral forest like a disembodied spirit from Tartarus, and lashed with its unfeeling breath the gigantic trees, which rocked to and fro, and bowed low their branches before its fell power as they acknowledged a master to be feared; sat there while the lightning played and gleamed like fiery serpents through the inky sky, while the thunder boomed and crashed and exploded like cannons about the hut; sat there until the heavings of the elements were stilled, — until the rage of the storm had spent itself, — until a roseate streak of light came stealing softly through the window, heralding the joyful tidings that the tempestuous night had passed, and morning, glorious morning, had come at last.

Toward the close of the day, in a quiet spot in the valley, where the grass lay green and bright, and the lovely, silver-green tresses of the weeping-willows swayed mournfully yet soothingly over the newly made grave, they laid Mildred Rocheford to rest. And Lester Clayton took his adopted daughter home, where she was kindly welcomed by his housekeeper, and the world seemed not altogether desolate to the orphan.

Lester Clayton sat in the elegant drawing-room of Robert Verne's imposing mansion, impatiently awaiting the appearance of his promised bride, — handsome and stately as usual, swarthy as a Paynim, but not en-

tirely at his ease. A foreboding of coming harm, which he could not rid himself of, still oppressed him vaguely, but the feeling was dispelled as the door opened, and a lady, imperial as Juno, glided into the room.

Very, very beautiful was Georgia Verne, with her haughty, patrician face, on whose every lineament were distinctly written pride and self-will; eyes dark and fascinating as an ominous cloud; and hair whose midnight blackness, full of purplish lights, fell in irregular, tendril-like ringlets, lending an indescribable, queenly grace to the proud head. She was habited in a robe of gold and crimson, which fell in heavy, statue-like folds around her majestic form, trailing the floor in its costly magnificence, and gleaming like a living flame as she came forward, stately and self-possessed as a royal princess, to meet the man who, ere another sun should drop to rest behind the western hill, would have the right to control in part her actions.

"Georgia, my own Georgia," Clayton said, rising and folding her in his arms, and imprinting a kiss upon her upturned brow.

She returned the kiss with equal fervor, saying playfully, "And so, Lester, you have made your appearance at last? Methinks you are somewhat negligent in your attendance upon your promised bride. What has prevented your coming before?"

"Circumstances arising rendered my coming before simply impossible, Georgia. A quondam playmate of mine, living in an out-of-the-way place, with but one neighbor near, with no friends and no money, a widow, knowing that she was on the verge of death, sent for me. I went, arriving barely in time to see her die. She prevailed upon me to adopt her daughter as my own. But let me tell you the story." And Lester Clayton commenced and related the events of the previous night.

The starry orbs of the magnificent beauty flashed ominously, and her tone was very scornful as she said, "You've adopted this walf as your own, Lester?"

"I have," Clayton replied, beginning to tremble with an undefined fear.

"And suppose, Lester, I am not willing to accept Mildred Rocheford's daughter as my own?"

"Then, Georgia, passionately as I idolize you, we must part. I cannot break my vow made to a dying woman; cannot perjure my

soul by a falsehood. But, Georgia, you are only trifling! You will for my sake receive, and be a mother to, the daughter of my once dearest friend?"

"Never!" The superb figure was lifted to its loftiest height; the arrogant head was thrown proudly back; while the splendid eyes shone with a contemptuous glance through the long, shadowy lashes that partially veiled them as the word burst forth so vehemently from her lips.

Georgia Verne was proud as Lucifer, and the words "then we must part" had nettled her to the quick, and she went on rapidly: "Never, Lester Clayton, never, I say! You must choose between me and this awkward walf of poverty. There is no other alternative. If you adopt her, I will never be your wife; but, on the other hand, if you send her adrift, then will I fully and freely fulfill my plighted troth. Your decision, sir?" And the tone was hard and icy, and the black eyes had in them a reddish blaze, as if they would ere long emit vivid sparks of fire as she asked the question.

Turning upon her his darkly handsome face alive with suffering, his fine brown eyes full of a troubled light, he said proudly, but, oh, with what profound depth of suppressed, concentrated pain and misery in his voice!—

"Then, Georgia Verne, we must part. The cruel verdict just given by you renders our marriage out of the question, for I cannot, *dare not*, break my oath made to a dying woman, much as I have loved you. In doing so, I have no doubt made an egregious mistake, and therefore the sooner rectified the better. But, oh, how I have been deceived as to your character! I thought you pure and guileless as a snowflake, loving me enough to sacrifice your wish to mine when you knew me to be in the right; whereas I find you out to my cost to be wicked and designing, and heartless as that image hewn from stone I was telling you of the other day! Farewell!" And, with a slight *conge*, Lester Clayton left the room; while, with a frenzied cry, the imperious belle flung herself upon the floor, clenching her pearl-tinted hands together, and moaning like a wounded kid, for the man who had left her was the only being she had any affection for.

But her pride was, if possible, even stronger than her love; and so, exorcising by a supreme effort what she styled her

weakness, Miss Verne arose, and, with her haughty head thrown back, her red lips curved in a Satanic smile, began pacing the floor with slow, measured steps, which soon increased to a rapid tread. On and on, like a mad, fretted tigress, she paced, striving in vain to quell the dull pain tugging so greedily at her heart-strings, until, from sheer exhaustion, she was compelled to stop. While, miserable and wretched, Lester Clayton proceeded on his way, musing on the tragic consummation of this his second bright dream, and wondering if it were a sin for him to love; or, if not, why it was his love always ended thus.

Seven years have drifted into eternity since Lester Clayton adopted the daughter of Mildred Rocheford as his own, and, from an awkward, simple little girl of eleven, Miriam has expanded into a graceful, mysteriously pretty maiden of eighteen, with fair, luxuriant hair, threaded with sunny gleams, and soft, frightened eyes, blue as the sunlit sky above, that had in them a wistful, far-away look, as if searching for some one who never came. For the past five years Miriam had been attending a first-class ladies' institute, sent there by Clayton, — who, after his estrangement from the arrogant daughter of Robert Verne, had been traveling in distant countries; but her education being now completed, she had returned home, and tonight was to witness her *debut* in society, under the chaperonage of Mrs. Towers, a widow lady, and an old friend of Lester Clayton.

Without the slightest attempt to attract attention was Miriam attired this evening, but very elegant and attractive she appeared in her robe of silken blue, with her fair yellow hair knotted back by clusters of milk-white snowdrops, which well became her pale, statuesque beauty. Tonight a wild unrest pervaded her whole being, and rendered her excessively nervous. It seemed to Miriam as if the spirit of her guardian were hovering near, and she should behold him that night. Here she fell into a deep Rembrandtesque study, a panoramic view shooting before her bewildered vision, in which was a chaotic medley of scenes, prominent above all one which for seven years had been engraved indelibly upon her memory. It was this: A low-browed hut slumbering on the edge of a forest, over-arched by the tangled limbs of hem-

locks and cedar-trees; a couch upon which rested the figure of a woman, placid and motionless, locked in death's last sweet sleep; a tall, dark man of commanding presence who had promised to protect the sobbing child crouching down by the window-sill, scared beyond the power of speech. — with a lighted lamp on the table casting phosphorescent gleams about the room, and lightning irradiating the earth without.

Methinks even now she could hear the clock tick on in its ceaseless monotone; the thunder crash and reverberate through the mountains; the wind chanting its storm-anthem just the same as on that fearful night. Methinks she could hear that voice which had such an inexpressible charm for her reiterating the vow to care for her; and, as she thought of him a wanderer in foreign lands, her slight form swayed like a frail reed in a tempest, and low her troubled face was buried in her hands as she prayed in eager, earnest tones that He who keeps guard o'er us on sea or land might bring her guardian safely to his home. Ah! how would she have felt if she had but known that Madame Rumor, whose predictions are not always to be relied upon, asserted that through her instrumentality he had lost a bride and become an exile?

The door opened, and her musings were cut short by the entrance of her maid, who announced the carriage in readiness for her mistress. Sadly Miriam arose, and followed her maid from her room, — on her sweet face a look of peace resting that had been a stranger there for years.

Half an hour later she stood in the brilliantly illuminated parlor of the exclusive Rutherfords, watching curiously the motley of fashionably arrayed people visible there, when her glance fell upon the colossal figure of a man whose face was very much bronzed by constant exposure to Eastern suns; upon whom her eyes were at once riveted, for she recognized him as her guardian, — Lester Clayton; though how he came to be there, and why he did not make his appearance at home first, she was unable to conjecture. She looked at him long and earnestly, noting the sarcastic sneer about the clear, chiseled lips, thinking he must have grown harder and colder than when he had adopted her, and striving to analyze her feeling for that stern, cold man, whose eyes were roving over that vast assembly of people, hoping, perhaps, he might

see there present the arrogant daughter of Robert Verne, whom even as he gazed athwart that vast "sea of faces" he espied, — handsomer, haughtier than of yore, but unmistakably Georgia Verne.

Without a single vestige of color suffusing his dark cheek as he beheld her who once had wielded a power over him well nigh as fatal as that wielded over Samson by Delilah, he walked coolly, deliberately across the room, up to where she was standing encompassed with a retinue of admirers, with the wit, the *persiflage*, the homage of the gallants circling about her.

He made her a profound *salaam*. "And again, Miss Verne, I have the pleasure of meeting you, after the space of many years."

A wave of crimson darted across Miss Verne's face, mounting even to her brow, then receded, leaving her marble pale. Her rich voice quavered a trifle as she said, "I was not aware, Mr. Clayton, you were in town. I shall be delighted to renew our acquaintance."

And she spoke truly, for she loved this "dark, stately cavalier" more passionately than of yore, and she grew very gay and affable as she thought, "I will win him back to his olden allegiance; and this time, come what will, I shall reign mistress of his name and heart." So she conversed animatedly on the matters of the day, — and her colloquial powers were of the highest order, — when he checked her in the midst of an elegantly rounded sentence, replete with imagery.

"Excuse me a moment, Miss Verne. I believe, nay, I am quite certain, that I see my ward, Miss Rocheford, here."

Robert Verne's daughter frowned perceptibly as he moved away, — a feeling of hate surging up in her heart against Miriam Rocheford, and she flushed and paled alternately as she saw her now for the first time. And well might she do so. For as the silvery splendor of the Parsee's idol is eclipsed by the far greater glory of the dazzling sun, so was Georgia Verne, radiantly handsome though she was, eclipsed by the slender, girlish creature with the gold-brown hair, growing Cleopatra-like low on her brow, and snow-white complexion, whose costume was as unpretentious as the attire of a *religieuse*.

The belle was bitterly anathematizing the fate that had made Lester Clayton adopt Miriam Rocheford as his child, when she

observed him leading the graceful girl up to her, and she wreathed her scornful lips in smiles as he said graciously, presenting Miriam to her, "My ward, Miss Rocheford, — Miss Verne."

She inclined her head in recognition of the introduction, with the baleful look of a Medusa in her orbs, that made Miriam shudder and turn pale, for she had realized instinctively that Georgia Verne hated her: for what she could not conjecture. But she forgot the look in listening to her guardian, who was describing in glowing language to Miss Verne his trip in distant lands. Presently turning to Miriam, he said, —

"I little thought, Miriam, to find you changed so much. I scarcely imagined my woe-begone, despairing *protege* would, during my absence, be transformed into the most perfectly beautiful woman I have ever seen. Miriam, you are the sunshine of your dark, saintly mother."

Miriam blushed rosily red at this direct compliment. "Why, my guardian, may I inquire, have you so studiously refrained from making me acquainted with the date of your arrival? Also why have you made your appearance here first instead of at your own home?"

"Because, Miriam, I wished to surprise you pleasantly, although I had not the remotest intention of appearing here first; but, through the invitation of a friend, consented to drop in a few moments, little dreaming I should find my ward here, and metamorphosed into such a regally beautiful lady. Miriam, you are wondrously lovely." And the shining brown eyes of Lester Clayton dwelt admiringly upon his *protege*, while those of the imperious heiress were filled with hate, as she noted the glance; and, as she began to realize that her olden power of pleasing him had gone forever, she bit her lip until a single speck of vivid crimson had left its imprint there. She struggled bravely to regain her power, but found herself ignominiously defeated; and when she took her departure that night it was with the firm conviction that Lester Clayton would some day take Miriam Rocheford — the child she was not willing to have him adopt — for his wife.

Her prophecy came true. Six months from that night Lester Clayton married his *protege*, the daughter of his first love; and Georgia realized, with a terrible pain at her heart, that he was lost to her forever.

## LILLA'S TWO VALENTINES.

BY MISS JULIA A. KNIGHT.

### CHAPTER I.

THE winter had been an unusually severe one, and even now, on the morning of St. Valentine's Day, King Frost still held sway with undiminished rigor. The ponds were frozen over, the ground was ironbound, and none of the early spring flowers—crocuses, snowdrops or primroses—had yet made their appearance.

In the cheerful parlor of a comfortable house in the town of Dover a party of four sat at breakfast. These were Dr. Marchant—a country medical practitioner of some eminence—his wife, his daughter Lilla—a pretty, two and twenty years old blonde—and Frank Drake, the doctor's ward and assistant, a pleasant-faced dark-eyed young fellow, about three years Lilla Marchant's senior. That there was a good understanding between the youthful couple was pretty evident from the glances that every now and then passed between them, and the complacency with which the elders looked on.

"I shan't get much work out of the girls to-day, I suspect?" said Mrs. Marchant, rather pettishly, as she handed her husband a cup of tea. "Such stuff and nonsense, I've no patience with it. Even our cook, Bolders, who is fat and at least fifty, evidently expects one. It's ridiculous. I might as well expect one myself."

"Well, my dear," returned the incorrigible doctor, "I should see nothing so strange in that either."

"But I should," retorted his wife; "and if any one dared—"  
Rat-tat! rat-tat!

"There's the postman!" cried Lilla, rising and going to the window, with a heightened color, and a look of expectancy on her face.

It was evident that whatever might be her mother's opinion on the subject, Lilla's valentine days were by no means over.

Frank Drake looked down on his plate, with a covert smile lurking about the corners of his mouth, but he said nothing.

A neat little maidservant entered the room carrying a small salver, on which were several letters, which she took direct to her master.

The doctor took them in his hand.

"Three for me; three for you, Frank; two for you, Lilla; and one for you, my dear."

And there was a comical twinkle in his eye as he threw the last letter across the table to his wife.

"I think mine is from my old schoolfellow, Bessie Wrench. She's married your old chum, Parkinson, you know, now, doctor," said Mrs. Marchant, as after turning her letter over and examining the address minutely, and in short, doing everything but break the seal, as is the absurd practice of people when they are in doubt about a correspondent, she at last proceeded to open it.

But who shall paint the good lady's wrath and indignation when she found that her letter was neither more nor less than a valentine!

The doctor burst into a roar of laughter.

"Very pretty, indeed, I declare," said he, taking the valentine from the hand of his wife. "Hearts and darts, and Cupids, and a church spire in the distance. All quite the orthodox style of thing."

"Doctor!" exclaimed his wife, in terrible tones.

But the doctor only laughed the more.

Meanwhile, Lilla had been examining her own two valentines. One was in an unknown hand, and to that she first directed her attention, reserving the second, which she observed at a glance was in Frank's writing, for a *bonne bouche*.

Her mother looked over her shoulder.

"Well, now, I call that beautiful, Lilla. Depend upon it, it's from Lieutenant Tregennia. He's a great admirer of yours, you know."

Frank frowned.

"Ah!" said the doctor, perhaps wishing, like his wife, to tease Frank a little, and winking at Mrs. Marchant as he spoke, "I've no doubt it is from Tregennia. You've made a conquest there, Lil."

But Lilla made no answer. She had by this time opened the second valentine, and as she glanced at it, an expression of extreme astonishment stole over her face, which was immediately succeeded by one

of intense wrath, as with flashing eyes she turned for an instant towards Frank, who appeared absorbed in the examination of his own letters.

Lilla made a gesture of indignant impatience.

That her second valentine was in Frank's handwriting there could be no possible doubt. But that it was not intended for the young lady into whose hands it had fallen was equally certain. It was not an ordinary valentine, sent partly for fun, or out of compliment. It was a passionate love letter. The writer had evidently taken advantage of the day, so it seemed to Lilla, to press a real and not a jesting suit.

The letter commenced:

"Darling Dora," and was signed "Hyacinth."

"I do believe," muttered Lilla, jealously, "that it's meant for Dora Mackinnon. I always thought Frank paid her too much attention."

In the meantime, Frank had been regarding Lilla's indignant and angry face with undisguised amazement, and the doctor had been looking in perplexity first at one and then at the other of the pair.

"Some lovers' quarrel," thought the worthy man; "it will all come right. I won't interfere." Then aloud, "By the way, Lilla, weren't you and Tregennis, and—and—Frank to make up a skating party to the large pond this morning?"

"Yes, papa."

"Be quick then, or you'll be late. It's past ten."

Lilla rose to make her preparations, still holding the obnoxious valentine in her hand, and left the room.

"Come, Sir Francis" (a name playfully given in the family to the young man, on account of the identity of his name with that of the great admiral), said Dr. Marchant, somewhat testily; "I can spare you until luncheon." Then as the door closed behind Frank, the doctor said to his wife, "Something wrong in that quarter—eh, my dear?"

"I can't make it out," rejoined Mrs. Marchant, looking both puzzled and distressed.

"Pooh! don't fret yourself, Mary. We had lovers' quarrels once upon a time, you know."

Mrs. Marchant smiled.

"Well, I'll go and see cook," she said.

"That's right, my dear. That's speaking

like a practical woman. "And I only hope," he added, with a last Parthian shaft at his wife, as he took up his letters and papers to proceed to his study, "that you'll find Mrs. Bolders and the maids better pleased with their valentines than you and Lilla are with yours, my dear."

Without loss of time, Frank had overtaken Lilla before she had reached the top of the flight of stairs leading to her bedroom.

"What is it, Lilla darling? What is the matter?" he exclaimed, breathlessly.

"Don't darling me, sir! Dora Mackinnon's your darling."

"Lilla!"

"I won't listen to a word," said Lilla, passionately, and making an effort to pass on.

But the young man laid his hand on her arm to detain her.

She threw it off impetuously.

"There," she said, putting the unlucky valentine into his hand; "look at that, sir. I suppose you never saw it before."

And she laughed in a manner not pleasant to hear. Frank Drake gazed for a moment in stupefaction at the letter he held. Then the whole matter flashed upon his mind, and he exclaimed, eagerly:

"Just listen to me a minute, Lilla!"

"I will not listen," said Lilla, more and more angrily. "You can go to Dora Mackinnon."

And she escaped to her room.

"And you can wait till Tregennis comes to fetch you, and if you fall through the ice I don't care!" shouted Frank, his patience quite exhausted.

And he strode down the staircase six steps at a time, snatched his hat and coat from their peg in the hall, and rushed out of the house, slamming the door violently behind him.

## CHAPTER II.

VERY pretty indeed looked Lilla Marchant in her velvet and furs, her beautiful golden hair surmounted by a coquettish little black velvet hat with a red plume, as she gracefully skimmed over the surface of the large pond with Lieutenant Tregennis and several other cavaliers in attendance. As for poor Frank, finding all his attempts at explanation repulsed, he was, with the design of piquing Lilla, devoting himself to a group of pretty girls, who seemed by no

means displeased with the attentions of Dr. Marchant's handsome assistant.

Lieutenant Tregennis having, according to previous arrangement, called at the doctor's house to accompany Frank and Lilla to the pond, had found his rival vanished, and Lilla in a frame of mind to encourage his own attentions.

"What a flirt she is!" thought Frank, mortified and jealous, "and what a fop that fellow Tregennis is. How I should like to punch his head!"

And then he redoubled his assiduities to the three pretty girls under his charge, until at last two of the trio began to flatter themselves that he meant something serious.

The scene was a very lively and interesting one. It being the fashion now-a-days for ladies to skate, a large portion of the fairer sex were indulging in that pastime, whilst others, too timorous to venture on the ice themselves, were collected on the banks of the great pond, watching with interest the graceful evolutions of their bolder sisters.

The black masses of civilians who crowded the ground on either side of the pond were interspersed with brilliant patches of scarlet, the coats of the soldiers from the garrison. The officers, of course, were in plain clothes, or "mufti," as they term it. But there were hundreds of private soldiers present, who had leave of absence from barracks for the morning, and whose picturesque uniforms formed no slight addition to the brilliancy of the "*coup d'œil*."

There were many equestrians, too, of both sexes, whose constant and rapid movements gave life to the panorama. Bitterly cold as was the air, it caused bright eyes to sparkle, and fair cheeks to flush, whilst oft-repeated peals of silvery laughter as some *contretemps* happened to unskillful or unlucky skaters showed that here, at least, were the light hearts and buoyant spirits which are so marked a characteristic of our happy-natured girls.

Lilla, to Frank's intense disgust and indignation, was carrying on a very decided flirtation with Lieutenant Tregennis. She did not care one single straw for the young officer; but she was piqued and angry with Frank, and, moreover, jealous of his marked attention to the three young ladies he was escorting; and she wished to show him that she had no intention of "wearing the willow," and that "there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it."

So she laughed and chatted with her military cavalier, and to all appearance made herself perfectly happy. In the course of their badinage it had oozed out that the lieutenant really had sent the valentine in the unknown hand, and as it would appear with something more than a temporary meaning.

"Leap year too," thought Lilla, as her admirer's attentions grew more and more marked. "How awkward for me!"

"Now, Miss Marchant!" cried the lieutenant, gayly—he had been on the point of saying Lilla—"I challenge you to a race to the other end of the pond."

Lilla laughingly accepted the challenge.

"Once, twice, thrice, and away!" cried young Tregennis, and away shot the two figures. "Take care of that airhole!" suddenly exclaimed the officer, as one was seen just ahead.

But the caution came too late. Lilla's slight form, a little in advance of her companion, was going at a greater velocity than his heavier one could do, and she was unable to stop herself. Crash, crash, a frightened scream, a sharp crack, and the unfortunate girl momentarily disappeared beneath the ice.

Aghast at the suddenness of the accident, young Tregennis stood gasping and staring at the hole wherein Lilla had disappeared, quite unequal to the emergency, and unable to offer any assistance beyond calling aloud for that help which he might himself have tendered. But many other gentlemen—Frank at their head—who had been watching the race, of course witnessed the catastrophe, and skated towards the spot with all possible speed. To throw off his overcoat and jump into the water—for the ice was now sufficiently broken all round to allow of twenty persons plunging in if necessary—was with Frank the work of a moment.

The water in this part of the pond was at least ten feet deep, and Lilla was therefore in extreme peril, the intense coldness of the weather being likely to induce immediate numbness and insensibility. Fortunately, however, Frank was almost as much at home in the water as Captain Webb, and seizing Lilla by her long and beautiful hair—which she wore loose according to the present fashion—just as she was about to disappear he drew her on to the ice amid the ringing cheers of the spectators.

Poor Lilla! in what a pitiable state she

was to be sure, as she stood on the ice shivering and dripping from head to foot. Twenty greatcoats were immediately offered in which to wrap her. But all Lilla's coquetry had vanished, and she gratefully and humbly accepted Frank's. The last shadow of the young man's resentment had vanished, too, at the sight of the girl's peril, and he tenderly enveloped her in the folds of his rough shaggy overcoat, and raising her in his arms, carried her with all speed to one of the many carriages which were in waiting to convey the fair skaters home. This untoward accident prematurely broke up the party, and very soon the great pond was entirely deserted.

That evening Lilla, in a multitude of warm wrappers, was reclining on the sofa in Dr. Marchant's library, whilst the light of the fire—there were no candles or lamps lit—cast a cheery red glow over the apartment. There was no one else present save Frank Drake, who sat on a low stool by Lilla's side, holding one of her hands in his. It was quite evident that more than a truce had been concluded between the belligerent parties. Peace had been proclaimed, and from all appearances it seemed likely to be a lasting one. Frank's greatcoat which had rendered such good service still hung drying before the fire. The lovers were prattling as lovers have done and will do till the end of time.

"And so you put the valentines into the wrong envelops, Frank," said Lilla, smiling; "but I was foolish enough to be jealous of Dora Mackinnon."

"Yes, darling; and—"

"Ah! you may call me 'darling' now."

Frank pressed the small white fingers, and continued:

"I'll tell you just how it was, Lilla. You see, Tom Myers is sweet on Dora Mackinnon, and I think there isn't much doubt but that she loves him dearly. But he wanted to make sure, you know, and send her a letter that she should take in a serious light, and not as a mere valentine."

"Yes, I understand that; but why should you write it?"

"Well, Tom thought Dora would be sure to guess who it really came from; but as it is St. Valentine's Day, and it is quite a usual thing to disguise one's writing on that day, or get some one else to write for you, he asked me—you know what a fellow he is

for fun—to write to Dora for him, and he wrote mine to you for me; but the long and short of it is that we were so busy laughing over the affair that we've put the letters into the wrong envelops, and you got the one from Tom to Dora, and Dora got the one I intended for you—and I dare say these two have had just such a row as we did!"

And Frank laughed.

"Frank dear," said Lilla, presently, "I must have my valentine, you know."

"O, of course, darling! I'll go over after supper, and take this unlucky thing to Dora, and bring back the other. Besides, it will be a real charity to make peace between Tom and his ladylove. I dare say they are as unhappy as we were."

"I am sure I was," said Lilla, frankly.

No hand squeezing now, but a kiss this time.

"I really did begin to think you cared for Tregennis," said Frank.

"And I was positive you cared for Dora."

Another exchange of kisses. After a moment Lilla lifted her head from Frank's breast.

"Frank dear, when I get that valentine I'll keep it as long as ever I live. It will be a reminder to me never to be jealous again."

"And I'll lay my greatcoat up in lavender, and never wear it again for the service it has rendered my darling. O, by the way, Lilla, I'll tell you in confidence a secret that'll make you laugh. It was Dr. Marchant who sent your dear mother her valentine."

"Papa!" No, really!" cried Lilla, laughing and clapping her hands.

"Yes. He knew what a prejudice Mrs. Marchant has against valentines, and he thought he would have a joke with her. And what do you think, Lilla? He gave it to me to direct, and I gave it to Tom Myers to ask Dora Mackinnon to do so."

"O dear me, what a 'Comedy of Errors.'"

"One might say, rather, 'Much Ado About Nothing!'"

"No," said Lilla, smiling; "I'll alter that, and it shall be, 'All's Well that Ends Well!'"

"Bravo, darling!"

Dr. Marchant opened the door and put in his head, and his cheery face beamed with satisfaction when he saw the state of things.

"Come, the Welsh rarebit and escalloped oysters are ready. Don't you two want any



supper? Now, Sir Francis, who first sailed round the world."

Lilla recovered her valentine. What its contents were we need not state, or whether it was more beautiful than that sent by Lieutenant Tregennis. It is enough that it satisfied Lilla.

So black coat beat red coat, and won the race.

Dr. Marchant has resigned his practice in favor of his former ward and assistant; but the good doctor and his wife still continue to reside with Mr. and Mrs. Drake. And annually, as the 14th of February comes round, there is sure in the comfortable old house about the time the post comes in to be a hearty laugh at the recollection of "LILLA'S TWO VALENTINES."

## LIONEL AT THE LAKE.

BY ANNA MASON.

"TA, ta!" he cried, and waved his little hand, cased in a faultless kid glove.

He was feeling in the best of humors. To begin with, the day was beautiful; Dame Nature was in such high spirits that her loyal children could not fail to sympathize with her.

Mr. Emerson tells the story of a lady who declared that the sense of being perfectly well-dressed gave a comfort which religion itself could not impart. Without going so far, we venture to say that a consciousness of being *comme il faut* in matters of the toilet, next to an undefiled conscience, is calculated to fill the human breast with a sense of serene complacency. Imagine, then, the happiness of Lionel, as, adorned in white trousers of stylish cut, a silk serge coat, made at Bell's, a snowy vest, with gold buttons, and linen which was a monument of the laundry art, he bade adieu to the ladies assembled on the veranda of the "Merripack House" to see him off. The diamond studs on his immaculate shirt front sparkled in the morning sun; a light breeze stirred his curling locks as he lifted his panama hat to the ladies; and as to his hand, he was fitted out with an ivory walking-stick, surmounted by a puppy's head wrought of gold. The latest and most fashionable perfume saturated his cambric handkerchief, on which were embroidered his initials, L. P. J., in monogram. In short, he was a slim, dapper, charming little fellow, a sweet specimen of the *genus homo*—a bright example of the curled darling of the nineteenth century.

The ladies assembled on the veranda were the four Misses Wilson—feeling slightly piqued that Lionel should find the "Lake House" attractive enough to induce him to forego the delights of their society for an entire day—and his sister, Miss Nelly Jones, who was tugging at one end of a string, while her terrier pulled at the other, in violent efforts to break away and follow Lionel, while it seemed extremely problematical which force would finally gain the day. Lionel smiled back at the ladies kindly, for, although he was what the French term *un petit Narcisse*, he was fond

of the ladies, in a lesser degree than of himself, and a little sorry for them, too, since he could marry but one of them—poor dears! He was a little lion; and has not sweet William of Avon sung that "A lion among ladies is a dreadful thing?"

In five minutes he was aboard the crazy little steamer that hourly plied between the "Merripack" and the "Lake House." He sought and found a secluded spot where he could elevate his feet to the deck railing, light a cigar, and give himself up to pleasant anticipations of his day's visit with Miss Hearsay, resident for the season at the "Lake House."

He enjoyed his trip, and scarcely realized the half hour that elapsed ere he reached his destination.

On the grand piazza he met several acquaintances, and ran directly against a waiter, who regarded him with an angry frown in which there was something of menace.

Lionel's face flushed with annoyance, for he had had a little unpleasantness with this waiter.

For three seasons Alonzo had run at the beck and call of Lionel Perry Jones, Esq., when, considering himself unhandsomely treated in the matter of fees, he had so far forgotten himself as to be guilty of impertinence to the said Lionel Percy Jones, Esq., whereupon the owner of that euphonious name had entered a complaint against Alonzo, and caused his dismissal from the "Merripack House."

It was not exactly agreeable to find him installed here; but Lionel was philosophical, and would not allow a slight annoyance to weigh upon his mind; therefore he dismissed all thought of the obnoxious Alonzo, and wreathed his face in smiles as Miss Hearsay appeared on the piazza and approached him with outstretched hands.

The lady's enthusiastic greeting might have flattered a man of less magnificent conceit than our hero, and it is not too much to say that he fairly glowed with self-satisfaction.

"It is so delightfully early," remarked Miss Chatty Hearsay, consulting her watch.

"Only eleven o'clock, and there is plenty of time for a row to 'Lovers' Retreat' before dinner."

"Your pleasure is mine," responded Lionel, like the gallant little fellow that he was.

Miss Chatty threw a bright-hued shawl over her white dress, and put on a distractingly pretty gipsy hat. Tripping lightly down to the wharf, followed meekly by Lionel, she ensconced herself snugly in the stern of "The Water Lily." He took up the oars in a leisurely way, determined to take it easy, and not to get into a vulgar perspiration, to the detriment of his immaculate habiliments.

The time sped quickly in laughter, song and silly pleasant chatter. The sun shone overhead; to the east the blue sky was piled with masses of silvery moving clouds, casting long shadows over distant hills; while in the west brooded an ominous black cloud, which neither Lionel nor Chatty noticed till it had expanded into a gray pall spreading over the entire sky, blotting out the sunshine, the fleecy clouds, and the beautiful azure, save for a few patches.

A breeze sprang up, and as our young lady and gentleman regarded each other in some consternation, a low rumble of thunder came to their ears.

"There's a terrific storm a brewing!" cried Chatty. "'Lovers' Retreat' is but an open pine grove, so we must row home again as quickly as possible."

"There's no other way," assented Lionel. And now he handled the oars in earnest.

A few large drops came down by way of prelude; then the rain descended in all its force, and the forlorn young couple were completely drenched ere they reached the wharf at the "Lake House."

"My hat is ruined," remarked Miss Chatty, cheerfully, while wringing out the limp ribbons. "I shall have to go to my room and renovate generally. Your feathers are slightly rumpled also, Mr. Jones, but you can step to the office and ask for a room. I shall be in the parlor in half an hour, and we will have a pleasant time indoors with music, poetry and conversation."

With a transcendent smile Miss Chatty vanished, and Lionel stepped to the desk to proffer his request. A gentlemanly clerk summoned a waiter, and Lionel was escorted to a room.

His boots were soaking wet in the run

from the landing to the house, while his white pantaloons, vest and linen clung about him limp as so many cotton rags. He gazed down upon himself ruefully.

"These clothes of mine will all have to go to the laundry," was his audible reflection.

"Yes sah," responded the colored factor, who, with arms respectfully folded, was regarding Lionel with a broad grin upon his ebon countenance.

"And what am I to do in the meantime?"

"You might get into bed, massa."

"How long should I be obliged to wait?"

"About an hour, sah."

"Well, there's no help for it, as I can see, so here goes. I'll get into bed, and you bundle these things to the laundry, and tell them to be quick about them."

"All right, sah." And Charles Henry disappeared, carrying off Mr. Jones's habiliments.

Poor Lionel could not sleep, but he drew the bedclothes about him, and waited in sad impatience till his watch showed him it was one o'clock; then he jerked at the bell-rope excitedly.

Charles Henry answered the summons.

"Are those duds of mine ready yet, my boy?"

"No sah, not perzactly; they aint dun got dry yet, massa," replied C. H., with a slight air of embarrassment.

"Well, you go down and hurry the womenites up, and I'll remember you in my will," winking at him in a friendly familiar way.

"All right, sah."

"And take my boots to be blacked; dinner will be ready in an hour, and there is a lady waiting for me."

"I will expediate de matters all I can, massa."

Half an hour more passed, when there came a gentle tap-a-tap-tap at the door.

"Come in," groaned Lionel.

In response to this invitation a woman—Miss Hearsay's trim maid—put her head in at the door, with the remark:

"Miss Chatty sends her compliments, sir, and wishes to know if you are feeling any ill effects from the wetting? The dressing-bell has rung, and they go in to dinner at two."

"I will join her soon," faltered our hero; and as the maid disappeared, he jerked the bell violently. The obsequious Charles

Henry appeared with commendable promptitude.

"See here, you Charles Henry," cried Lionel, in a passion. "I can stand this thing no longer. I want my clothes at once. How long does it take the laundry maids in this house to press out a few things?"

Charles Henry looked like anything but the clever *Cedipus* as the Sphinx propounded this conundrum in a tone of withering sarcasm. Scratching his woolly head, he confessed that the two laundresses were away for the day, and that Lionel's clothes had been taken some four miles off by a man who had orders to wait for them and bring them back.

"Thunder!" ejaculated Lionel, and sprang from the bed with so violent a gesture that Charles Henry fled from the room in terror.

Two o'clock came, and Lionel heard the gong sound for dinner, the opening and shutting of doors, the echo of footsteps, the sound of laughing voices in the hall. These sounds died away, but, by straining his ears, he fancied he could hear the distant clatter of knives and forks.

"This is infernal!" groaned he, with real tears streaming down his cheeks. "I am abominably treated."

His face flushed furiously as he thought of the ridiculous account of his position that had probably reached Miss Hearsay's ears by this time.

Again there came a rap at the door. This time it was Charles Henry's woolly head that appeared in answer to the "Come in."

"Would you like your dinner fotched to you, massa?"

"Yes, I would, you bloody rascal; and if ever I get out of this I'll break every bone in your black carcass for the trick you have served me, blamed if I don't!"

"Laws! massa, 'taint anyways my fault, I reckon." And Lionel heard a series of suppressed chuckles as Charles Henry shuffled off.

By half past three dinner was over, and again Lionel summoned Charles Henry. That worthy appeared in fear and trembling.

"Are those clothes here yet?" inquired Lionel, in cold stern tones.

"No sah, not perzactly. I'se respecting dem ebery minit."

"If they are not here shortly, I shall ring for the proprietor, and report to him your

conduct in this affair. Now, sirrah, take this change and bring me up the daily papers, a mint-julep, and half a dozen cigars. I shall go frantic if I cannot do something to while away the time."

These orders were executed, and Lionel passed an hour and a half in reading and smoking.

At five o'clock Charles Henry entered solemnly, carrying in his arms the renovated garments, which he spread out carefully on the sofa and chairs.

"Where are my boots?"

"They'll be at your door in three minits, sah."

With a sigh of relief Lionel began the humanizing process of washing and dressing, till he reached a point where he considered his boots requisite.

He opened the door a trifle, extended his hand, and, surely enough, the boots were on time. But as Lionel drew them in, his countenance expressed the liveliest consternation. They were most carefully and artistically treated to a coat of whitewash. It was too much for human nature to endure with any degree of equanimity—his wrath gathered itself to a focus, and he jerked the bell, determined to pour it all out on the devoted head of Charles Henry.

No response coming to his imperative summons, Lionel stepped into the hall, to find his door surrounded by a crowd of grinning waiters and giggling maids.

In the crowd he discovered Charles Henry, and collaring him, pushed him without ceremony into the apartment, while he ordered a darkey to go for Mr. K., the proprietor.

His incoherent talk and wild gesticulations caused people to stop and inquire what the matter was. In the midst of the hubbub Mr. K. appeared, and passed quickly into Lionel's apartment, closing the door after him.

"What's the trouble here, Mr. Jones?"

Lionel stammered through an excited explanation.

"And what do you know about the white-washing of this gentleman's boots?" demanded Mr. K. of Charles Henry.

"Notin' at all, massa. I jist only gone and left dem in de shed to be blacked and fotched up yar."

"You have them put in perfect order within ten minutes, or you remain no longer in my employ."

Charles H. scratched his woolly head, and departed with a crestfallen air.

Lionel informed Mr. C. of his recent difficulties with Alonzo.

"I'll send for the black rascal at once, and have the matter thoroughly investigated."

The gong sounded for tea.

"Not now," said Lionel, impatiently. "I have a lady waiting for me."

"So soon after tea, then, as you find yourself at liberty."

C. Henry brought in the boots restored to pristine blackness and brightness, and Lionel quickly drew them on and descended to the parlor. Miss Chatty was not there. He stepped out upon the piazza. The storm was long since over, and there was every promise of a magnificent sunset. But nothing could dispel the cloud of gloom from Lionel's sensitive soul. Miss Chatty's trim maid came up to him and informed him that Miss Hearsay, with her parents and sisters, was at the tea-table, and had left a request for him to join them there. Somehow the consciousness of being the pink of perfection in matters of dress, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, was not enough to restore Lionel's self-possession; his knees trembled beneath him as he followed the waiter from the door to

the other end of the long dining-hall, where were Miss Chatty and her party.

Every one had stopped eating to gaze after him; every one had smiled; every one had indulged some whispered remark. Alas! poor Lionel felt only too certain that Miss Chatty had amused her acquaintances by giving them her own version of his day in bed. He was cordially received by her friends and herself, who did all in their power to make him forget the unpleasantness of the day's events; but nothing could restore his lost spirits. His soul was full of bitterness towards Miss Hearsay, and then and there died out the incipient tenderness that had long agitated his little heart for her—could he smile and be gay while enduring those mortal throes?

Soon after tea he bade his quondam friends farewell, and returned to the "Merripack House" a sadder and wiser man than when he left it in the morning. He did not stop to investigate the complicity of Alonzo in his late troubles, postponing doing so until some time when he could feel more heart in the matter. The worst of it was, the affair spoiled the remainder of his stay at the lake, for it was not pleasant to be pointed out to strangers as the man who went to bed for a day while his clothes were being washed and ironed.